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THE
COMPLETE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS

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THE
COMPLETE WORKS
OF
ROBERT BURNS
(SELF-INTERPRETING)

ILLUSTRATED WITH SIXTY ETCHINGS
AND WOOD CUTS, MAPS AND FACSIMILES



VOLUME IV
PART II

PHILADELPHIA
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MY SPOUSE NANCY.

Tune—"My Jo Janet."

(GEO. THOMSON'S COLL., 1799.)

"HUSBAND, husband, cease your strife,
 Nor longer idly rave, Sir ;
 Tho' I am your wedded wife
 Yet I am not your slave, Sir."
 "One of two must still obey,
 Nancy, Nancy ;
 Is it Man or Woman, say,
 My spouse Nancy ?"

"If 'tis still the lordly word,
 Service and obedience ;
 I'll desert my sov'reign lord,
 And so, good bye, allegiance !"
 "Sad will I be, so bereft,
 Nancy, Nancy ;
 Yet I'll try to make a shift,
 My spouse Nancy."

"My poor heart then break it must,
 My last hour I am near it :
 When you lay me in the dust,
 'Think how you will bear it.'
 "I will hope and trust in heaven,
 Nancy, Nancy ;
 Strength to bear it will be given,
 My spouse Nancy."

"Well, Sir, from the silent dead,
 Still I'll try to *daunt* you ;
 Ever round your midnight bed
 Horrid sprites shall haunt you !"

scare

“I’ll wed another like my dear
 Nancy, Nancy ;
 Then all hell will fly for fear,
 My spouse, Nancy.”

[This witty dramatic song has been very popular from the day it was first given to the public. It was forwarded to Thomson in December 1793. The poet’s working sketches of some of the stanzas are in the British Museum, where the second verse is thus varied :—

‘ If the word is still obey !
 Always love and fear you ;
 I will take myself away,
 And never more come near you,’
 Sad will I be, &c.

The closing stanza thus begins—

‘ Well, ev’n from the silent dead,
 Sir, I’ll try to daunt you,’ &c.

The biographer of William Hutton of Birmingham narrates that in 1811 at a watering-place in the North Riding of Yorkshire, that good-natured philosopher amused and delighted a large and fashionable company, when he was eighty-eight years old, by singing the husband’s part of “My Spouse, Nancy,” while his daughter performed the wife’s part. John Wilson the Scottish vocalist used to sing this song with great effect at his concerts.]

ADDRESS,

SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER BENEFIT NIGHT,
 DECEMBER 4TH, 1793, AT THE THEATRE, DUMFRIES.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

STILL anxious to secure your partial favor,
 And not less anxious, sure, this night than ever,
 A Prologue, Epilogue, or some such matter,
 ’Twould vamp my bill, said I, if nothing better ;
 So sought a poet, roosted near the skies,
 Told him I came to feast my curious eyes ;

Said, nothing like his works was ever printed ;
And last, my prologue business slyly hinted.
“Ma’am, let me tell you,” quoth my man of rhymes,
“I know your bent—these are no laughing times :
Can you—but, Miss, I own I have my fears—
Dissolve in pause, and sentimental tears ;
With laden sighs, and solemn-rounded sentence,
Rouse from his sluggish slumbers, fell repentance ;
Paint Vengeance as he takes his horrid stand,
Waving on high the desolating brand,
Calling the storms to bear him o’er a guilty land ?”

I could no more—askance the creature eyeing,
D’ye think, said I, this face was made for crying?
I’ll laugh, that’s poz—nay more, the world shall
know it ;

And so, your servant ! gloomy Master Poet !

Firm as my creed, Sirs, ’tis my fix’d belief,
That Misery’s another word for Grief :
I also think—so may I be a bride !
That so much laughter, so much life enjoy’d.

Thou man of crazy care and ceaseless sigh,
Still under bleak Misfortune’s blasting eye ;
Doom’d to that sorest task of man alive—
To make three guineas do the work of five :
Laugh in Misfortune’s face—the beldam witch !
Say you’ll be merry, tho’ you can’t be rich.

Thou other man of care, the wretch in love,
Who long with jiltish arts and airs hast strove ;
Who, as the boughs all temptingly project,
Measur’st in desperate thought—a rope—thy neck—
Or, where the beetling cliff o’erhangs the deep,
Peerest to meditate the healing leap :

Would'st thou be cur'd, thou silly, moping elf?
 Laugh at her follies—laugh e'en at thyself:
 Learn to despise those frowns now so terrific,
 And love a kinder—that's your grand specific.

To sum up all, be merry, I advise;
 And as we're merry, may we still be wise.

[This second Address written by the Bard for his favorite actress, Miss Fontenelle, has been preserved to the public through the accident of its having been communicated in a letter from Burns to Mrs. Dunlop. Dr. Currie dated that letter, "15th Dec. 1795;" but from internal evidence it is proved to have been penned not later than 1793.]

There cannot now be a possibility of doubt that Mrs. Dunlop, who was so proud of having the Wallace blood in her veins, comported herself towards Burns during the two latter years of his existence like the rest of his fair-weather friends, and that her relative Dr. Currie took the utmost pains, and resorted to a few mean shifts, to submerge that fact. No dependence whatever can be placed on the dates he gives to Burns's letters addressed to Mrs. Dunlop in his later years; for these have been purposely disarranged and misdated, in order to carry out the fraudulent coverture so necessary to preserve his friend's integrity as a life-long patron of Burns.]

COMPLIMENTARY EPIGRAM ON MARIA RIDDELL.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

"PRAISE Woman still," his lordship roars,
 "Deserv'd or not, no matter!"
 But thee whom all my soul adores,
 Ev'n Flattery cannot flatter:
 MARIA, all my thought and dream,
 Inspires my vocal shell;
 The more I praise my lovely theme,
 The more the truth I tell.

[This trifle, a copy of which is inscribed on the back of the poet's first draft of "Scots wha hae," &c., was bought by Mr. Fred. Locker, London, at the sale of Burns's manuscripts which belonged to the late Mr. Pickering. An indorsation explains that some one, in presence of Mrs. Riddell, informed the poet that Lord Buchan, in an argument, vociferated that "Women must be always flattered grossly, or not praised at all." Whereupon Burns pencilled these lines on a slip of paper which he handed to the lady. We suspect that our poet was here only establishing, instead of seeking to rebut, his lordship's argument.]

REMORSEFUL APOLOGY.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

THE friend whom, wild from Wisdom's way,
The fumes of wine infuriate send,
(Not moony madness more astray)
Who but deplores that hapless friend?

Mine was th' insensate frenzied part,
Ah! why should I such scenes outlive?
Scenes so abhorrent to my heart!—
'Tis thine to pity and forgive.

[It is not very certain to whom these lines were addressed. The manuscript from which Dr. Currie printed the lines, is now in the British Museum, and there is a docquet on it, apparently in Currie's hand, stating that it was addressed to a Mr. M'Kenzie whom the bard had offended. There can be little question but that the lines were addressed to Mrs. Riddell.]

WILT THOU BE MY DEARIE?

Tune—"The Sutor's Tochter."

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

WILT thou be my Dearie
When Sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
O wilt thou let me cheer thee !
By the treasure of my soul,
That's the love I bear thee :
I swear and vow that only thou
Shall ever be my Dearie !
Only thou, I swear and vow,
Shall ever be my Dearie !

Lassie, say thou lo'es me ;
Or, if thou wilt na be my ain,
O say na thou'lt refuse me !
If it winna, canna be,
Thou for thine may choose me,
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Still trusting that thou lo'es me !
Lassie, let me quickly die,
Still trusting that thou lo'es me !

[This is one of the most remarkable of all Burns's lyrics, and one in which he specially prided himself. We cannot resist coming to the conclusion that Maria Riddell was its intended heroine. The first mention we have of it is in the poet's letter to Alexander Cunningham, dated 3rd March 1794, thus:—" *Apropos*, do you know the much admired Highland air, called 'The Sutor's Tochter?' It is a first-rate favorite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it to you as it was sung, with great applause in some fashionable circles, by Major Robertson of Lude, who was here with his corps."

The correspondence of the poet, prior to the close of 1793, contains repeated reference to the "lobster-coated puppies" who associated with Mrs. Riddell at that period ; and the lady's grand-

son, Mr. Arthur de Noe Walker, of 10 Ovington Gardens, London, has now in his possession the poet's holograph copy of this song which he presented to Mrs. Riddell, along with the one given at page 162, *supra*, "The last time I came o'er the muir."]

A FIDDLER IN THE NORTH.

Tune—"The King o' France he rade a race."

(CROMEK, 1808.)

AMANG the trees, where humming bees,
 At buds and flowers were hinging, O,
 Auld Caledon drew out her drone,
 And to her *pipe* was singing, O: bagpipe
 'Twas Pibroch, Sang, Strathspeys and Reels,
 She *dirl'd* them aff fu' clearly, O; played
 When there cam' a yell o' foreign squeels,
 That *dang* her *tapsalteerie*, O. knocked skyhigh

Their capon craws an' queer "ha, ha's,"
 They made our *lugs* grow *eerie*, O; ears dismal
 The hungry *bike* did scrape and *fyke*, swarm gesture
 Till we were wae and weary, O:
 But a royal ghaist, wha ance was cas'd,
 A prisoner, aughteen year awa,
 He fir'd a Fiddler in the North,
 That *dang* them *tapsalteerie*, O.

[It appears probable from the terms of one of the poet's letters to Johnson (forming part of the Hastie Collection of Burns MSS. in the British Museum), that Neil Gow paid a visit to Dumfries about this period, and had several meetings with Burns; and it seems reasonable to infer that the present production was one of the results of those interviews. The poet thus wrote to his correspondent:—"I was much obliged to you for making me acquainted with Gow. He is a modest, intelligent, worthy fellow, besides his being a man of genius in his way. I have spent many happy hours with him in the short while he has been here." The "royal

ghaist" referred to is King James I. of Scotland, who was kept a prisoner in England for eighteen years.

It is at the same time not unlikely that the "Gow" thus referred to was not the famous "Neil," but a brother of his, who played the violoncello to the tenor of the distinguished "Fiddler in the North." Burns was introduced to Neil Gow during his Highland Tour in 1787, so that the words above quoted could scarcely be applicable to him.

The original MS. of this song is now in possession of Henry Probasco, Esq., of Cincinnati, Ohio.]

A RED, RED ROSE.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

My Luve is like a red, red rose,
That's newly sprung in June :
My Luve is like the melodie,
That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luve am I ;
And I will luve thee still, my Dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun ;
And I will luve thee still, my Dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare-thee-well, my only Luve !
And fare-thee-well, a while !
And I will come again, my Luve,
Tho' 'twere ten thousand mile !

[This little Love-chant has been a universal favorite since it was first given to the world. It is one of those lyrics, in imitation of the old minstrels, which called forth the commendations of Hazlitt in his critical remarks on Burns's poetry. The lines and

sentiments are so exceeding simple that any reader, on seeing them for the first time, naturally imagines that he has seen or heard them before; but no one editor or annotator of Burns has been able to shew that they ever were in print before their appearance in the *Museum* with Burns's name attached.]

RESISTLESS KING OF LOVE.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

YOUNG JAMIE, pride of a' the plain,
Sae gallant and sae gay a swain,
Thro' a' our lasses he did rove,
And reign'd resistless King of Love.

But now, wi' sighs and starting tears,
He strays amang the woods and breers;
Or in the glens and rocky caves,
His sad complaining *dowie* raves:— dolefully

“I wha sae late did range and rove,
And chang'd with every moon my love,
I little thought the time was near,
Repentance I should buy sae dear.

“The slighted maids my torments see,
And laugh at a' the pangs I *dree*; endure
While she, my cruel, scornful Fair,
Forbids me e'er to see her mair.”

[The original MS. of this song, supplied to Johnson, is in the Hastie Collection at the British Museum. Stenhouse regards it as an unclaimed production of Burns, an opinion to which we have nothing to say in dissent. An examination of the words at once suggests that it may have been one of those pastorals which the poet composed at this period with a view to conciliate the temper, and melt the coldness of Maria Riddell, whose lyrical tastes were very Arcadian. After the quarrel between that pair of Platonic lovers, which we have referred to at p. 192, *supra*, the prose corre-

spondence betwixt them plainly exhibits a kind of diplomatic coquettishness, whose issue might be either reconciliation or open rupture. Unfortunately, the policy of Mrs. Riddell led her to overstretch the *haut-en-bas-rigour* by which she meant to depress and discipline her offending lover; and that roused the "stubborn something in his bosom" which impelled him to adopt the position of an injured man, in whom meekness would be pusillanimity, and revenge the noblest of virtues.

The foregoing verses are adapted in the *Museum* to a plaintive and well-known air called "The Carlin o' the Glen."]

THE FLOWERY BANKS OF CREE.

(GEO. THOMSON'S COLL., 1798.)

HERE is the glen, and here the bower,
All underneath the birchen shade;
The village-bell has told the hour,
O what can stay my lovely maid?

'Tis not Maria's whispering call;
'Tis but the balmy-breathing gale,
Mixt with some warbler's dying fall,
The dewy star of eve to hail.

It is Maria's voice I hear;
So calls the woodlark in the grove,
His little, faithful mate to cheer;
At once 'tis music and 'tis love.

And art thou come! and art thou true!
O welcome dear to love and me!
And let us all our vows renew,
Along the flowery banks of Cree.

[This song appears to have been composed with the same purpose as that immediately preceding. The poet forwarded it to Thomson in April 1794, with directions to set it to an air called "The Banks of Cree," composed by Lady Elizabeth Heron of Heron. He had

sent Thomson no verses since the month of December preceding, and now he wrote, "For six or seven months I shall be quite in song, as you shall see by and by."

Meanwhile the original breach between Burns and his intimate friends at Woodley Park became wide, in spite of all his efforts at reconciliation. The poet became at length so deeply incensed against the once admired Maria and her husband that he stooped to express his rancor in strains truly unworthy of him; and these we must now proceed to give.]

MONODY

ON A LADY FAMED FOR HER CAPRICE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

"Tell me what you think of the following Monody. The subject of it is a woman of fashion in this country, with whom at one period I was well acquainted. By some scandalous conduct to me, and two or three other gentlemen here as well as me, she steered so far to the north of my good opinion, that I have made her the theme of some ill-natured things. The epigram appended struck me the other day as I passed her carriage."—*Burns to Mrs. M'Lehose*, 1794.

How cold is that bosom which folly once fired,
How pale is that cheek where the rouge lately
glisten'd ;
How silent that tongue which the echoes oft tired,
How dull is that ear which to flattery so listen'd !

If sorrow and anguish *their* exit await,
From friendship and dearest affection remov'd ;
How doubly severer, Maria, thy fate,
Thou diedst unwept, as thou livedst unlov'd.

Loves, Graces, and Virtues, I call not on you ;
So shy, grave, and distant, ye shed not a tear :
But come, all ye offspring of Folly so true,
And flowers let us cull for Maria's cold bier.

We'll search through the garden for each silly flower,
We'll roam thro' the forest for each idle weed ;
But chiefly the nettle, so typical, shower,
For none e'er approach'd her but rued the rash deed.

We'll sculpture the marble, we'll measure the lay ;
Here Vanity strums on her idiot lyre ;*
There keen Indignation shall dart on his prey,
Which spurning Contempt shall redeem from his ire.

THE EPITAPH.

HERE lies, now a prey to insulting neglect,
What once was a butterfly, gay in life's beam :
Want only of wisdom denied her respect,
Want only of goodness denied her esteem.

PINNED TO MRS. WALTER RIDDELL'S CARRIAGE.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

If you rattle along like your Mistress's tongue,
Your speed will outrival the dart ;
But a fly for your load, you'll break down on the road,
If your stuff be as rotten's her heart.

EPITAPH FOR MR. WALTER RIDDELL.

(STEWART, 1801.)

Sic a reptile was Wat, sic a miscreant slave,
That the worms ev'n d—d him when laid in his grave ;
'In his flesh there's a famine,' a starved reptile cries,
'And his heart is rank poison !' another replies.

* *N.B.*—The lady affects to be a poetess.—*R. B.*

[The foregoing productions, all very characteristic of their author, must be left to speak for themselves. Chambers truly remarks that "to have given expression to such sentiments regarding a female, even though a positive wrong had been inflicted, would have been totally indefensible ; and still more astounding is it to find, that the bard could think of exhibiting such effusions to another female."]

EPISTLE FROM ESOPUS TO MARIA.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

"Well ! divines may say of it what they please ; but *execration* is to the mind what phlebotomy is to the body ; the vital sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations."—*Letter to Peter Hill.*

FROM those drear solitudes and frowsy cells,
Where Infamy with sad Repentance dwells ;*
Where turnkeys make the jealous portal fast,
And deal from iron hands the spare repast ;
Where truant 'prentices, yet young in sin,
Blush at the curious stranger peeping in ;
Where strumpets, relics of the drunken roar,
Resolve to drink, nay half—to whore no more ;
Where tiny thieves not destin'd yet to swing,
Beat hemp for others, riper for the string :
From these dire scenes my wretched lines I date,
To tell Maria her Esopus' fate.

"Alas ! I feel I am no actor here !" †
'Tis real hangmen real scourges bear !
Prepare, Maria, for a horrid tale
Will turn thy very rouge to deadly pale ;

* In these dread solitudes and awful cells,
Where heavenly pensive contemplation dwells, &c.

POPE'S "*Eloisa to Abelard.*"

† Quoted from Lyttelton's Prologue to the *Coriolanus* of Thomson.

Will make thy hair, tho' erst from gipsy poll'd,
By barber woven, and by barber sold,
Though twisted smooth with Harry's nicest care,
Like hoary bristles to erect and stare.
The hero of the mimic scene, no more
I start in Hamlet, in Othello roar ;
Or, haughty Chieftain, 'mid the din of arms,
In Highland bonnet, woo Malvina's charms ;
While sans-culottes stoop up the mountain high,
And steal from me Maria's prying eye.
Blest Highland bonnet ! once my proudest dress,
Now prouder still, Maria's temples press ;
I see her wave thy towering plumes afar,
And call each coxcomb to the wordy war :
I see her face the first of Ireland's sons,*
And even out-Irish his Hibernian bronze ;
The crafty Colonel leaves the tartan'd lines,†
For other wars, where he a hero shines :
The hopeful youth, in Scottish senate bred,
Who owns a Bushby's heart without the head,‡
Comes 'mid a string of coxcombs, to display
That *veni, vidi, vici*, is his way :
The shrinking Bard adown the alley skulks,
And dreads a meeting worse than Woolwich hulks ;
Though there, his heresies in Church and State
Might well award him Muir and Palmer's fate :
Still she undaunted reels and rattles on,
And dares the public like a noontide sun.

* The poet here enumerates several of Mr. Riddell's friends whom he used to meet at Woodley Park, most of those connected with the army. The distinguished Irishman here referred to was named Gillespie.

† Colonel M'Dowal of Logan, noted as the Lothario of his County during many years.

‡ A son of John Bushby of Tinwald Downs, a wealthy writer, and banker, in Dumfries, with whom Burns had been very intimate. The son, Mr. Maitland Bushby, was then a young advocate, much inferior to his father in intellect. (John Bushby was a native of Cumberland, and came, a very poor young man, to Dumfries. By tact and ability he rose to become the agent of many of the county proprietors, as well as the leading lawyer and banker of the Burgh. Many unsavory stories regarding his unscrupulous ways of making money were floating about Dumfries in the earlier decades of the century.—J. H.)

What scandal called Maria's jaunty stagger
The ricket reeling of a crooked swagger?
Whose spleen (e'en worse than Burns's venom, when
He dips in gall unmix'd his eager pen,
And pours his vengeance in the burning line,)—
Who christen'd thus Maria's lyre-divine
The idiot strum of Vanity bemus'd,
And even th' abuse of Poesy abus'd?—
Who called her verse a Parish Workhouse, made
For motley foundling Fancies, stolen or strayed?

A Workhouse! ah, that sound awakes my woes,
And pillows on the thorn my rack'd repose!
In durance vile here must I wake and weep,
And all my frowsy couch in sorrow steep;
That straw where many a rogue has lain of yore,
And vermin'd gipsies litter'd heretofore.

Why, Lonsdale, thus thy wrath on vagrants pour?
Must earth no rascal save thyself endure?
Must thou alone in guilt immortal swell,
And make a vast monopoly of hell?
Thou know'st the Virtues cannot hate thee worse;
The Vices also, must they club their curse?
Or must no tiny sin to others fall,
Because thy guilt's supreme enough for all?

Maria, send me too thy griefs and cares;
In all of thee sure thy Esopus shares.
As thou at all mankind the flag unfurls,
Who on my fair one Satire's vengeance hurls—
Who calls thee, pert, affected, vain coquette,
A wit in folly, and a fool in wit!
Who says that fool alone is not thy due,
And quotes thy treacheries to prove it true!

Our force united on thy foes we'll turn,
And dare the war with all of woman born :
For who can write and speak as thou and I ?
My periods that decyphering defy,
And thy still matchless tongue that conquers all reply !

[The peculiar plan of this final poetical attack on the Maria whom its author had so recently worshipped, was explained in a communication made by a well-informed correspondent of the *Kendal Mercury* in July 1852.

A dramatic company, headed by Mr. James Williamson, an actor of considerable merit, occasionally performed in the little theatre behind the George Inn of Dumfries. About the close of 1793, Williamson, like Burns, was frequently admitted into the charmed circle at Woodley Park. In the following Spring, after the fatal quarrel, the poet happened to hear of a most extraordinary adventure having befallen Williamson and his associates while performing at Whitehaven. The Earl of Lonsdale, a local despot whose ill-fame was not unknown to Burns, had committed the whole company to prison as vagrants. Seizing on this incident, Burns conceived the idea of the foregoing epistle (formed on the model of "Eloisa to Abelard") as being penned by Williamson under the name "Esopus," in prison at Whitehaven, to the lady whose society he had recently enjoyed.]

EPITAPH ON A NOTED COXCOMB,

CAPT. WM. RODDICK, OF CORBISTON.

(ALDINE ED., 1839.)

LIGHT lay the earth on Billy's breast,
His chicken heart so tender ;
But build a castle on his head,
His *scull* will prop it under.

ON CAPT. LASCELLES.

(BRIGHT'S "GLENRIDDELL MSS.," 1874.)

WHEN Lascelles thought fit from this world to depart,
 Some friends warmly thought of embalming his heart;
 A bystander whispers—"Pray don't make so much o't,
 The subject is poison, no reptile will touch it."

ON WM. GRAHAM, ESQ., OF MOSSKNOWE.

(CUNNINGHAM'S 8VO. ED., 1840.)

"STOP thief!" dame Nature call'd to death,
 As Willy drew his latest breath;
 How shall I make a fool again?
 My choicest model thou has ta'en.

ON JOHN BUSHBY, ESQ., TINWALD DOWNS.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

Here lies John Bushby—*honest man*,
 Cheat him, Devil—if you can!

[The preceding four Epigrams are among the list of those sent by Burns to Creech, in May 1795; and they are also recorded in the author's handwriting, in the Glenriddell volume of his poetry, now in the Liverpool Athenæum. After the death of Glenriddell in April 1794, the poet obtained the Book from the Riddell family by application for it; and the Epigrams—placed at the end of the volume, were evidently inserted after that period.

It seems very likely that the subjects of these lampoons were friends and associates of Mr. Walter Riddell, who thus came in for a share of the spleen and ill-nature which Burns so much indulged in on the occasion of his outcast with that lady.

There is a family likeness between the lines on Capt. Lascelles,

and the Epitaph on Mr. Walter Riddell, given at page 204. The opening line is nearly word for word the same as the first line of the following happy effusion by Prior :—

“ When Bibbo thought fit from this world to retreat,
 As full of champagne as an egg’s full of meat,
 He waked in the boat and to Charon he said,
 He would be row’d back, for he was not yet dead :
 “ Trim the boat and sit quiet ! ” stern Charon replied,
 “ You may have forgot you were drunk when you died.”]

SONNET ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT RIDDELL,

OF GLENRIDDELL AND FRIARS’ CARSE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

No more, ye warblers of the wood ! no more ;
 Nor pour your descant grating on my soul ;
 Thou young-eyed Spring ! gay in thy verdant stole,
 More welcome were to me grim Winter’s wildest roar.

How can ye charm, ye flowers, with all your dyes ?
 Ye blow upon the sod that wraps my friend !
 How can I to the tuneful strain attend ?
 That strain flows round the untimely tomb where
 Riddell lies.

Yes, pour, ye warblers ! pour the notes of woe,
 And soothe the Virtues weeping o’er his bier :
 The man of worth—and hath not left his peer !
 Is in his “ narrow house,” for ever darkly low.

Thee, Spring ! again with joy shall others greet ;
 Me, memory of my loss will only meet.

[Somewhat unexpectedly, the Laird of Carse died on 21st April 1794, unreconciled to Burns, who remembering only his worth and former kindness, immediately conceived this elegiac sonnet.

Chambers informs us that the Sonnet was composed so early as to appear in the local newspaper beneath the announcement of Glenriddell's death. The merits of the composition are the greater that it was executed so promptly; and the recollection of this magnanimous act of Burns must have touched Maria Riddell's mind with some compunctious force, when she performed a kindred act, little more than two years thereafter, for their author, also laid in his last sleep.

So recently as 23rd January, 1794, the University of Edinburgh had conferred on Robert Riddell the degree of LL.D. Within a month after his death, James Johnson of Edinburgh advertised as "Now ready, Robert Riddell of Glenriddell's Collection of Scots, Galwegian and Border Tunes," and Burns, in a note to Johnson, dated 29th June 1794, thanks him for his "kind present of poor Riddell's Book."

Mr. Walter Riddell, who on 1st April 1794, had advertised Woodley Park for sale, inherited Friars' Carse after his brother's death; but, fast-living squire as he must have been, Friars' Carse also was advertised for sale in June following.]

THE LOVELY LASS O' INVERNESS.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

THE lovely lass o' Inverness,

Nae joy nor pleasure can she see;

For, e'en to morn she cries "alas!"

And ay the *saut* tear *blin's* her e'e. salt blinds

"Drumossie moor, Drumossie day—

A waefu' day it was to me!

For there I lost my father dear,

My father dear, and brethren three.

"Their winding-sheet the bluidy clay,

Their graves are growin green to see;

And by them lies the dearest lad

That ever blest a woman's¹ e'e!

“Now wae to thee, thou cruel lord,
 A bluidy man I trow thou be ;
 For mony a heart thou hast made sair,
 That ne’er did wrang to thine or thee !”

[The kindly Spring wakened up the chords of song within the bosom of our Minstrel, and bestirring himself to produce lyrics for the pages of Johnson and Thomson, he was gradually diverted from the morbid desire to write lampoons and personal satire. In Oswald’s “Caledonian Pocket Companion,” he found a pretty enough melody bearing the title of the song in the text, and forthwith he produced these verses, which are generally thought to be amongst his most successful imitations of the style of the older minstrels. “Drumossie Muir” is merely another name for “Culloden Lea,” where the closing battle of the Rebellion in 1745-46, was fought, with such disaster to the hopes of the Jacobites. On Thursday, 6th September 1787, according to an entry in the record of the poet’s Highland Tour, he “came over Culloden Muir,” and had “reflections on the field of battle.” The reader may judge of these reflections by perusing the text.

The original MS. in the British Museum shews the important variation, ‘woman’s e’e, for “lover’s e’e” in Johnson.]

CHARLIE, HE’S MY DARLING.

(JOHNSON’S MUSEUM, 1796.)

’TWAS on a Monday morning,
 Right early in the year,
 That Charlie came to our town,
 The young Chevalier.

Chorus—An’ Charlie, he’s my darling,
 My darling, my darling,
 Charlie, he’s my darling,
 The young Chevalier.

As he was walking up the street,
 The city for to view,
 O there he spied a bonie lass
 The window looking through,
 An' Charlie, &c.

Sae light's he jumped up the stair,
 And tirl'd at the pin ;*
 And wha sae ready as hersel'
 To let the laddie in !
 An' Charlie, &c.

He set his Jennie on his knee,
 All in his Highland dress ;
 For *brawly* well he ken'd the way perfectly
 To please a bonie lass,
 An' Charlie, &c.

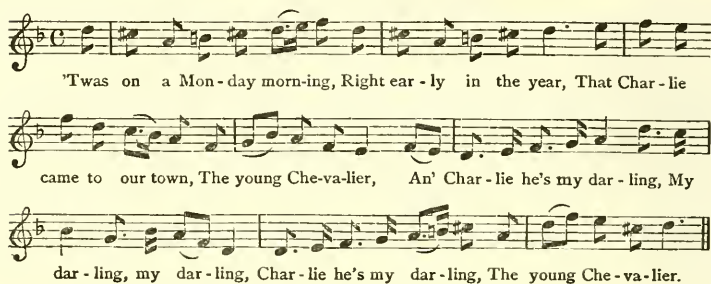
It's up yon heathery mountain,
 An' down yon *scroggie* glen, brushy
 We *daur na gang* a milking, dare not go
 For Charlie and his men,
 An' Charlie, &c.

[This Jacobite effusion was never seen in print before its appearance in Johnson's fifth volume ; and as it was communicated by Burns, it is fairly presumed to be his own. It was a favorite of Sir Walter Scott, and it will be recollected that when in Italy, seeking to repair his hopelessly shattered frame, his mind would wander northwards to his native glens, as was made apparent by his frequent crooning of the closing verse of this song :—"It's up yon heathery mountain," &c.]

* A "risping-pin," fixed on the back of house doors, was a notched rod of iron, with loose ring attached ; this made a loud ricketing noise, on being drawn up and down. The old ballad of the *Grey Cock*, thus refers to it :—

"So up Johnie rose, and to her door she goes,
 And gently tirl'd at the pin."

The melody to which these words are sung was much improved in passing through the hands of Stephen Clarke, the musical editor of the *Museum*, and we consequently transfer it to our pages.]



'Twas on a Mon-day morn-ing, Right ear-ly in the year, That Char-lie
came to our town, The young Che-va-lier, An' Char-lie he's my dar-ling, My
dar-ling, my dar-ling, Char-lie he's my dar-ling, The young Che-va-lier.

BANNOCKS O' BEAR MEAL.*

Barley

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

Chorus—Bannocks o' bear meal,
Bannocks o' barley,
Here's to the Highlandman's
Bannocks o' barley!

WHA, in a *brulyie*, will
First cry "a parley?"
Never the lads wi' the
Bannocks o' barley,
Bannocks o' bear meal, &c.

broil

WHA, in his *wae* days,
Were loyal to Charlie?
WHA but the lads wi' the
Bannocks o' barley!
Bannocks o' bear meal, &c.

woe

* The Highlanders carried bannocks or thick cakes of bear and barley meal as provender, when following "Charlie" in their unfortunate campaign of 1745 and 1746.—J. H.

[The above is entirely the production of Burns, who wrote it to supplant some very indifferent words to which the fine old tune was sung. A song called, "Cakes o' Crowdy," dating so far back as 1688, is still extant, and is said to have been a composition of Lord Newbattle, eldest son of the then Earl of Lothian. Another song, perhaps older, but very indecorous, commencing—"A lad and a lass lay in a Killogie," was sung to the same air. The melody is short and sweet, and we therefore annex it.]

CHORUS.

Ban-nocks o' bear meal, Ban-nocks o' bar-ley, Here's to the High-

SONG.

land-man's ban-nocks o' bar-ley. Wha, in a brul-yie, will First cry

"a par-ley?" Ne-ver the lads wi' the ban-nocks o' bar-ley!

THE HIGHLAND BALOU.

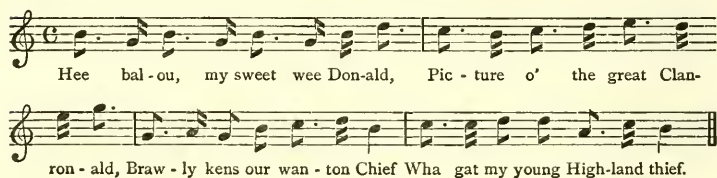
(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

HEE balou, my sweet wee Donald, Ha! be soothed
 Picture o' the great Clanronald;
Brawlie kens our wanton Chief full well
 Wha gat my young Highland thief.

Leeze me on thy bonie *craigie*, save neck
 An thou live, thou'll steal a *naigie*, horse
 Travel the country thro' and thro',
 And bring hame a Carlisle cow.

Thro' the Lawlands, o'er the Border,
 Weel, my babie, may thou *furder*! plunder
 Harry the louns o' the laigh Countrie,
 Syne to the Highlands hame to me.

[This rich picture of an embryo Highland Cateran displays the hand of Burns in every line, although his name is not attached to it in the *Museum*. Stenhouse informs us that the poet obtained the Gaelic words and music in course of his Highland Tour, and that the text is merely a translation into "laigh country" dialect.]



THE HIGHLAND WIDOW'S LAMENT.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

OH I am come to the low Countrie,
 Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
 Without a penny in my purse,
 To buy a meal to me.

It was na sae in the Highland hills,
 Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
 Nae woman in the Country wide,
 Sae happy was as me.

For then I had a score o' *kye*, cows
 Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
 Feeding on yon hill sae high,
 And giving milk to me.

And there I had three score o' *yowes*, ewes
 Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie!
 Skipping on yon bonie *knowes*, hills
 And *casting woo* to me. yielding wool

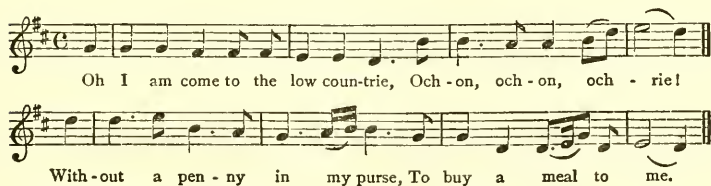
I was the happiest of a' the Clan,
 Sair, sair may I repine ;
 For Donald was the *brawest* man, *finest-looking*
 And Donald he was mine.

Till Charlie Stewart * cam at last,
 Sae far to set us free ;
 My Donald's arm was wanted then,
 For Scotland and for me.

Their waefu' fate what need I tell,
 Right to the wrang did yield ;
 My Donald and his Country fell,
 Upon Culloden field.

Ochon ! O Donald, oh !
 Ochon, Ochon, Ochrie !
 Nae woman in the world wide,
 Sae wretched now as me.

[This pathetic ballad is altogether the work of Burns. The plaintive Gaelic air to which it is allied was obtained by him from a lady in the North. The battle of Culloden was fought on 16th April 1746, after which the Duke of Cumberland encamped at Fort Augustus, whence he sent off detachments to ravage the whole country round. The castles of Lovat, Glengary, and Lochiel were destroyed ; the cottages were demolished or burnt to the ground, the cattle driven away, and the families of the hapless rebels, if spared from fire and sword, had to wander houseless and without food over the desolate heath. Such is the picture retrospectively glanced at in the ballad. We annex the air.]



* The Pretender.

IT WAS A' FOR OUR RIGHTFU' KING.

(JOHNSON'S MUSEUM, 1796.)

It was a' for our rightfu' King
We left fair Scotland's strand ;
It was a' for our rightfu' King
We e'er saw Irish land, my dear,
We e'er saw Irish land.

Now a' is done that men can do,
And a' is done in vain ;
My Love and Native Land fareweel,
For I maun cross the main, my dear,
For I maun cross the main.

He turn'd him right and round about,
Upon the Irish shore ;
And gae his bridle reins a shake,
With adieu for evermore, my dear,
And adieu for evermore.

The soger frae the wars returns,
The sailor frae the main ;
But I hae parted frae my love,
Never to meet again, my dear,
Never to meet again.

When day is gane, and night is come,
And a' folk bound to sleep ;
I think on him that's far awa,
The lee-lang night and weep, my dear,
The lee-lang night and weep.

[This admirable ballad, like the two immediately preceding, we believe to be wholly the composition of Burns. We are informed, both by Lockhart and by Kirkpatrick Sharpe, that Sir Walter Scott never tired of hearing it sung from the pages of *Johnson*, by his daughter at her piano. Mr. Sharpe has pointed to a very poor stall-ballad, called "Molly Stuart," consisting of eleven verses of disconnected doggerel in which occurs, "like a jewel in a swine's snout," the most picturesque stanza in the text—that beginning, "He turned him right and round about"—but we have no doubt that the broadside referred to was printed after 1796.

Sir Walter, under the impression that the stanza in question is ancient, has made very free use of it, first in "Rokeby" (1813), and then in Elspeth's Ballad, in "The Antiquary" (1816). In the former, as part of the fine song, "A weary lot is thine, fair maid," he thus introduces the verse :—

"He turn'd his charger as he spake,
Upon the river shore,
He gave his bridle reins a shake,
Said, 'Adieu for evermore, my love,
And adieu for evermore.'"

Burns's original MS. of this song, as sent to Johnson, is now the property of Mr. Patterson, Publisher, Edinburgh. Had the poet lived to see it published along with the music, he would have been under the necessity of altering the rhythm of the opening line, which, as it stands, cannot be made to fit the melody, while each first line of the other four stanzas fits it exactly. It ought to read thus :—" 'Twas a' for him, our rightfu' King."]

CORRESPONDENCE.

(²) TO FRANCIS GROSE, ESQ., F.S.A.

(CROMEK, 1808.)*

[1790.]

AMONG the many witch-stories I have heard relating to Alloway Kirk, I distinctly remember only two or three :—

Upon a stormy night, amid whistling squalls of wind, and bitter blasts of hail—in short, on such a night as the devil would choose to take the air in—a farmer, or farmer's servant, was plodding and plashing homeward with his plough-irons on his shoulder, having been getting some repairs on them at a neighboring smithy. His way lay by the Kirk of Alloway ; and being rather on the anxious look-out in approaching a place so well known to be a favorite haunt of the devil, and the devil's friends and emissaries, he was struck aghast by discovering through the horrors of the storm and stormy night, a light, which on his nearer approach plainly showed itself to proceed from the haunted edifice. Whether he had been fortified from above, on his devout supplication, as is customary with people when they suspect the immediate presence of Satan ; or whether, according to another custom, he had got courageously drunk at the smithy, I will not

* This letter was communicated by Mr. Gilchrist of Stamford to Sir Egerton Brydges, who published it in the "*Censura Literaria*," 1796.

pretend to determine : but so it was that he ventured to go up to, nay, into the very kirk. As luck would have it, his temerity came off unpunished.

The members of the infernal junto were all out on some midnight business or other, and he saw nothing but a kind of kettle, or cauldron, depending from the roof, over the fire, simmering some heads of unchristened children, limbs of executed malefactors, &c., for the business of the night. It was in for a penny in for a pound, with the honest ploughman ; so without ceremony he unhooked the cauldron from off the fire, and pouring out the damnable ingredients, inverted it on his head, and carried it fairly home, where it remained long in the family, a living evidence of the truth of the story.

Another story, which I can prove to be equally authentic, was as follows :—

On a market-day in the town of Ayr, a farmer from Carrick, and consequently whose way lay by the very gate of Alloway kirkyard, in order to cross the river Doon at the old bridge, which is about two or three hundred yards farther on than the said gate, had been detained by his business, till by the time he reached Alloway it was the wizard-hour—between night and morning.

Though he was terrified with a blaze streaming from the kirk, yet as it is a well-known fact that to turn back on these occasions is running by far the greatest risk of mischief, he prudently advanced on his road. When he had reached the gate of the kirkyard, he was surprised and entertained, through the ribs and arches of an old Gothic window, which still faces the highway, to see a dance of witches merrily footing it round their old sooty blackguard master, who was keeping them all alive with the power of his bagpipe. The farmer, stopping his horse to observe them a little, could plainly descry the faces of many old women of

his acquaintance and neighborhood. How the gentleman was dressed tradition does not say ; but that the ladies were all in their smocks ; and one of them happening unluckily to have a smock which was considerably too short to answer all the purposes of that piece of dress, our farmer was so tickled that he involuntarily burst out, with a loud laugh, "Weel luppen, Maggie wi' the short sark !" and recollecting himself, instantly spurred his horse to the top of his speed. I need not mention the universally known fact, that no diabolical power can pursue you beyond the middle of a running stream. Lucky it was for the poor farmer that the river Doon was so near, for notwithstanding the speed of his horse, which was a good one, against he reached the middle of the arch of the bridge, and consequently the middle of the stream, the pursuing, vengeful hags were so close at his heels, that one of them actually sprang to seize him : but it was too late ; nothing was on her side of the stream but the horse's tail, which immediately gave way at her infernal grip, as if blasted by a stroke of lightning : but the farmer was beyond her reach. However, the unsightly, tail-less condition of the vigorous steed was, to the last hour of the noble creature's life, an awful warning to the Carrick farmers, not to stay too late in Ayr Markets.

The last relation I shall give, though equally true, is not so well identified as the two former, with regard to the scene : but as the best authorities give it for Alloway, I shall relate it.

On a summer's evening, about the time that nature puts on her sables to mourn the expiry of the cheerful day, a shepherd boy, belonging to a farmer in the immediate neighborhood of Alloway kirk, had just folded his charge, and was returning home. As he passed the kirk, in the adjoining field, he fell in with a crew of men and women, who were busy pulling

stems of the plant Ragwort. He observed, that as each person pulled a Ragwort, he or she got astride of it, and called out, "up, horsie!" on which the Ragwort flew off, like Pegasus, through the air with its rider. The foolish boy likewise pulled his Ragwort, and cried, with the rest, "up, horsie!" and strange to tell, away he flew with the company. The first stage at which the cavalcade stopt, was a merchant's wine cellar in Bordeaux, where, without saying, by your leave, they quaffed away at the best the cellar could afford, until the morning, foe to the imps and works of darkness, threatened to throw light on the matter, and frightened them from their carousals.

The poor shepherd lad, being equally a stranger to the scene and the liquor, heedlessly got himself drunk; and when the rest took horse, he fell asleep and was found so next day by some of the people belonging to the merchant. Somebody who understood Scotch, asking him what he was, he said he was such-a-one's herd in Alloway, and by some means or other getting home again, he lived long to tell the world the wondrous tale.—I am, &c., &c.

R. B.

Not till the middle of November 1790 do we meet with any reference to the poem of "Tam O'Shanter." Mrs. Dunlop sent immediate intimation to Burns of her daughter Mrs. Henrie's safe delivery, at Loudon Castle, of a son and heir who was born on the 15th day of that month. The poet in his reply thus remarks:—"I am much flattered by your approbation of my *Tam O'Shanter* which you expressed in your former letter. . . . I have a copy ready to send you by the first opportunity; it is too heavy to send by post." Thus we see that the poem had been some time in existence, and that a transcript of it, more or less complete, had been communicated to that lady in a now missing letter of prior date. We have no letters of Burns dated in December following, but on 17th January 1791 he seems to have enclosed a copy of this poem to his Edinburgh friend, Wm. Dunbar, Esq., W.S., and requested his strictures on the performance. A week later he enclosed a copy of it in a letter to Alexander Cunningham, in which he refers to it as a poem "just finished—my first essay in the way of tales."

(29) TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, *November, 1790.*

“As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.”

Fate has long owed me a letter of good news from you, in return for the many tidings of sorrow which I have received. In this instance I most cordially obey the apostle—“Rejoice with them that do rejoice”—for me, *to sing* for joy, is no new thing; but *to preach* for joy, as I have done in the commencement of this epistle, is a pitch of extravagant rapture to which I never rose before.

I read your letter—I literally jumped for joy—How could such a mercurial creature as a poet lumpishly keep his seat on the receipt of the best news from his best friend? I seized my gilt-headed Wangee rod—an instrument indispensably necessary—in my left hand, in the moment of inspiration and rapture; and stride, stride—quick and quicker—out skipt I among the broomy banks of Nith to muse over my joy by retail. To keep within the bounds of prose was impossible. Mrs. Little’s is a more elegant,* but not a more sincere compliment to the sweet little fellow, than I, extempore almost, poured out to him in the following verses:—

Sweet flow’ret, pledge o’ meikle love,
And ward o’ mony a prayer,
What heart o’ stane wad thou na move,
Sae helpless, sweet, and fair.—*See page 17, supra.*

I am much flattered by your approbation of my *Tam O’Shanter*, which you express in your former

*The milk-maid at Loudon Castle had composed some rhymes on the same occasion which Mrs. Dunlop forwarded to Burns.

letter; though, by the bye, you load me in that said letter with accusations heavy and many; to all of which I plead, "not guilty!" Your book is, I hear, on the road to reach me.* As to the printing of poetry, when you prepare it for the press you have only to spell it right, and place the capital letters properly: as to the punctuation, the printers do that themselves.

I have a copy of *Tam O'Shanter* ready to send you by the first opportunity; it is too heavy to send by post.

I heard of Mr. Corbet lately.† He, in consequence of your recommendation, is most zealous to serve me. Please favor me soon with an account of your young folk; if Mrs. H. is recovering, and the young gentleman doing well.

R. B.

1791.

(4) TO WILLIAM DUNBAR, ESQ., W.S.

(CROMEK, 1808.) ‡

ELLISLAND, 17th Jan. 1791.

I AM not gone to Elysium, most noble Colonel, but am still here in this sublunary world, serving my God by propagating his image, and honoring my king by begetting him royal subjects.

Many happy returns of the season await my friend.

* Mrs. Dunlop was then printing for private circulation a few sketches of her own in prose and verse. Few poets would entrust to printers the punctuation of their lines; and neither did Burns do so with his own poetry. Perhaps he reckoned it a matter of indifference how his correspondent's effusions were treated in that respect.

† One of the general Supervisors of Excise with whom Burns afterwards corresponded.

‡ The date and concluding paragraph of this letter were first given in Hogg and Motherwell's edition 1835. The term "noble Colonel" refers to Dunbar's rank in the *corps d'esprit* called "The Crochallan Fencibles."

May the thorns of Care never beset his path ! May Peace be an inmate of his bosom, and Rapture a frequent visitor of his soul ! May the bloodhounds of Misfortune never track his steps, nor the screech-owl of Sorrow alarm his dwelling ! May Enjoyment tell thy hours, and Pleasure number thy days, thou friend of the bard ! Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee ! ! !

As a further proof that I am still in the land of existence, I send you a poem, the latest I have composed. I have a particular reason for wishing you only to show it to select friends, should you think it worthy a friend's perusal ; but if, at your first leisure hour, you will favor me with your opinion of, and strictures on, the performance, it will be an additional obligation on, dear Sir, your deeply indebted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(⁸) TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER,
EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)*

ELLISLAND, 17th Jan. 1791.

TAKE these three† guineas, and place them over against that damned account of yours, which has gagged my mouth these five or six months ! I can as little write good things as write apologies to the man I owe money to. O the supreme curse of making three guineas do the business of five ! Not all the labors of Hercules ; not all the Hebrews' three centu-

* The reader, on comparing our text with that of Currie, will see what liberties he took with the original. We are indebted to George Wilson, Esq., grandson of Mr. Hill, for access to the poet's MS.

† In Currie's edition there is here a misprint of "two" for *three*. The original account between the poet and Peter Hill was lately in the possession of Thomas Thorburn, Esq., of Ryedale, and under date Jan. 20, 1791, Hill credits Burns with a payment of £3 to account, leaving a balance of £3, 7s, 5d.

ries of Egyptian bondage, were such an insuperable business, such an infernal task!!

Poverty! thou half-sister of Death, thou cousin-german of Hell! where shall I find force of execration equal to thy demerits? By thee, the venerable Ancient, though in this insidious obscurity grown hoary in the practice of every virtue under heaven, now laden with years and wretchedness, implores from a stony-hearted son of Mammon, whose sun of prosperity never knew a cloud, a little, little aid to support his very existence, and is by him denied and insulted. By thee, the man of sentiment, whose heart glows with independence, and melts with sensibility, inly pines under the neglect, or writhes, in bitterness of soul, under the contumely of arrogant, unfeeling wealth. By thee, the man of Genius, whose ill-starred ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remark neglected, and his person despised, while shallow Greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause. Nor is it only the family of Worth that have reason to complain of thee: the children of Folly and Vice, though in common with thee the offspring of Evil, smart equally under thy rod. Owing to thee, the man of unfortunate disposition and neglected education is condemned as a fool for his dissipation; despised and shunned as a needy wretch when his follies, as usual, have brought him to want; and when his unprincipled necessities drive him to dishonest practices, he is abhorred as a miscreant, and perishes by the justice of his country.

But far otherwise is the lot of the man of family and fortune. *His* early extravagances and follies are fire and spirit; *his* consequent wants are the embarrassments of an honest fellow; and when, to remedy the matter, he sets out with a legal commission to plunder distant provinces, and massacre peaceful na-

tions, he returns laden with the spoils of rapine and murder ; lives wicked and respected, and dies a Villain and a Lord. Nay, worst of all—alas for helpless woman ! the needy wretch who was shivering at the corner of the street, waiting to earn the wages of casual prostitution, is ridden down by the chariot wheels of the Coroneted RIP, hurrying on to the adulterous assignation ; she who, without the same necessities to plead, riots nightly in the same guilty trade !!!

Well ! divines may say of it what they please ; but I maintain that a hearty blast of execration is to the mind what breaking a vein is to the body ; the overloaded sluices of both are wonderfully relieved by their respective evacuations. I feel myself vastly easier than when I began my letter, and can now go on to business. You will be so good then as send, by the first Dumfries carrier, all, or as many as you have by you, of the following books. I am, &c., R. B.

(⁶) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 23^d January 1791.

MANY happy returns of the season to you, my dear friend ! As many of the good things of this life as is consistent with the usual mixture of good and evil in the cup of Being !

I have just finished a poem—*Tam O'Shanter*—which you will receive enclosed. It is my first essay in the way of tales.

I have these several months been hammering away at an elegy on the amiable and accomplished Miss Burnet. I have got, and can get, no farther than the following fragment, on which please give me your strictures. In all kinds of poetic composition, I set

great store by your opinion ; but in sentimental verses, in the poetry of the heart, no Roman Catholic ever set more value on the infallibility of the Holy Father than I do on yours.

I mean the introductory couplets as text verses.

ELEGY ON THE LATE MISS BURNET OF MONBODDO.

(See page 18, *supra*.)

Let me hear from you soon, Adieu !

ROBT. BURNS.

(³⁰) TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 7th February, 1791.*

WHEN I tell you, Madam, that by a fall, not from my horse, but with my horse, I have been a cripple for some time, and that this is the first day my arm and hand have been able to serve me in writing ; you will allow that it is too good an apology for my seemingly ungrateful silence. I am now getting better, and am able to rhyme a little, which implies some tolerable ease ; as I cannot think that the most poetic genius is able to compose on the rack.

I do not remember if ever I mentioned to you my having an idea of composing an elegy on the late Miss Burnet, of Monboddo. I had the honor of being pretty well acquainted with her, and have seldom felt so much at the loss of an acquaintance, as when I heard that so amiable and accomplished a piece of God's work was no more. I have as yet gone no

*Chambers, with a strange defiance of arithmetic has changed this date to "7th April." The boy Francis Wallace was born 18th Aug. 1789, consequently on February 7th, 1791, he was just past 17 months old. The accident here referred to must have occurred in January, and according to later correspondence, he was the victim of a similar fall at the end of March following.

farther than the following fragment, of which please let me have your opinion. You know that elegy is a subject so much exhausted, that any new idea on the business is not to be expected; 'tis well if we can place an old idea in a new light. How far I have succeeded as to this last, you will judge from what follows.

[Here follows the Elegy (see page 18, *supra*), same as in the letter to Cunningham above given; but with the following stanza added:—

The parent's heart that nestled fond in thee,
That heart how sunk, a prey to grief and care;
So deckt the woodbine sweet you aged tree,
So, from it ravag'd, leaves it bleak and bare.

I have proceeded no further.

Your kind letter, with your kind *remembrance* of your godson, came safe. This last, Madam, is scarcely what my pride can bear. As to the little fellow, he is, partiality apart, the finest boy I have of a long time seen. He is now seventeen months old, has the smallpox and measles over, has cut several teeth, and never yet had a grain of doctor's drugs in his bowels.

I am truly happy to hear the "little floweret" is blooming so fresh and fair, and that the "mother plant" is rather recovering her drooping head. Soon and well may her "cruel wounds" be healed! I have written thus far with a good deal of difficulty. When I get a little abler you shall hear farther from, Madam,
yours, R. B.

(1) TO THE REV. ARCH. ALISON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 14th February, 1791.

SIR,—You must by this time have set me down as one of the most ungrateful of men. You did me the honor to present me with a book, which does honor

to science and the intellectual powers of man, and I have not even so much as acknowledged the receipt of it. The fact is, you yourself are to blame for it. Flattered as I was by your telling me that you wished to have my opinion of the work, the old spiritual enemy of mankind, who knows well that vanity is one of the sins that most easily beset me, put it into my head to ponder over the performance with the look-out of a critic, and to draw up, forsooth, a deep-learned digest of strictures on a composition, of which, in fact, until I read the book, I did not even know the first principles. I own, Sir, that at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime, than the twingle-twangle of a Jew's harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twigg, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock; and that from something innate and independent of all associations of ideas—these I had set down as irrefragable, orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith. In short, Sir, except Euclid's Elements of Geometry, which I made a shift to unravel by my father's fire-side, in the winter evenings of the first season I held the plough, I never read a book which gave me such a quantum of information, and added so much to my stock of ideas, as your "Essays on the Principles of Taste." One thing, Sir, you must forgive my mentioning as an uncommon merit in the work, I mean the language. To clothe abstract philosophy in elegance of style, sounds something like a contradiction in terms; but you have convinced me that they are quite compatible.

I enclose you some poetic bagatelles of my late composition. The one in print is my first essay in the way of telling a tale.—I am, Sir, &c. R. B.

The gentleman above addressed was an Episcopal minister in Edinburgh whom the poet met one evening, in Feb. 1789, at the house of Professor Dugald Stewart. In the reminiscences of Burns sent by the Professor to Dr. Currie, he thus refers to that meeting. "My friend Mr. Alison, was the only other person in company. I never saw Burns more interesting. A present which Mr. Alison sent him afterwards of his 'Essays on Taste' drew from the poet a letter of acknowledgement, which I remember to have read with some degree of surprise at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed of the general principles of the doctrine of Association." The doctrine referred to is now considered to have been one of the dreams of philosophy, which was hastily adopted by a few metaphysical writers in Edinburgh about the close of last century, and then dismissed as baseless, like the fabric of other dreams. Burns's letter on the subject, although apparently earnest enough, reads somewhat like a satire on the new philosophy. Mr. Alison was father of Sir Arch. Alison, Bart., Sheriff of Lanarkshire, the author of a History of Europe, from a high Conservative point of sight.

PROSPECTUS OF A NEW EDITION OF POEMS BY MICHAEL BRUCE.
LONDON, February 1791.

"By subscription. Speedily will be published, price Three Shillings, by J. Forbes, Covent Garden, London, a new edition of Poems by the late Michael Bruce, to which will be subjoined a few select pieces by Robert Burns. The profits which may arise from this publication are to be employed solely for the support of Michael Bruce's mother."

The Rev. George Husband Baird, on 8th Feb. 1791, addressed a letter to Burns, which Dr. Currie printed as part of the correspondence of our poet. The young clergyman who then applied to Burns on the subject was residing at the Duke of Athole's house in London. In Nov. 1792 he was admitted as minister of New Greyfriars' Church, Edinburgh, and at the same time was appointed joint-Professor of Oriental Languages with Dr. James Robertson, in the college there. Ultimately, Baird was Principal of the University of Edinburgh.

He now solicited the aid of Burns's name and pen in support of the scheme he had embarked in: "May I beg to

know (he wrote,) if you will take the trouble of perusing the unpublished manuscripts of Bruce that I am in possession of; and of giving your opinion, and suggesting what curtailments, alterations, or amendments, occur to you as advisable? And will you allow us to let it be known, that a few lines by you will be added to the volume?"

(¹) TO THE REV. G. H. BAIRD, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, [*February*,] 1791.

WHY did you, my dear Sir, write to me in such a hesitating style on the business of poor Bruce? Don't I know, and have I not felt, the many ills, the peculiar ills that poetic flesh is heir to? You shall have your choice of all the unpublished poems I have; and had your letter been so directed as to have reached me sooner (it only came to my hand this moment), I should have directly put you out of suspense on the subject. I only ask that some prefatory advertisement in the book, as well as the subscription bills, may bear that the publication is solely for the benefit of Bruce's mother. I would not put it in the power of ignorance to surmise, or malice to insinuate, that I clubbed a share in the work from mercenary motives. Nor need you give me credit for any remarkable generosity in my part of the business. I have such a host of peccadilloes, failings, follies, and backslidings (any body but myself might perhaps give some of them a worse appellation), that by way of some balance, however trifling, in the account, I am fain to do any good that occurs in my very limited power to a fellow-creature, just for the selfish purpose of clearing a little the vista of retrospection.

ROBT. BURNS.

Unfortunately, Currie did not think proper to give the whole of the above letter to the public, and the MS. seems now to have been lost. Mr. John Small, A.M., of the University Library of Edinburgh, recently cleared up the little mystery with which Burns's share in this benevolent movement has been shrouded for eighty years past. The papers of the late Principal Baird, in possession of Professor Balfour, have been carefully examined by Mr. Small, in relation to the edition of Bruce's poems referred to; and in a scholarly paper he has all but demonstrated the fact that Logan, and not Bruce, was the author of the "Ode to the Cuckoo." He has discovered also from those Baird papers, that Burns generously offered several of his best unpublished poems to forward the scheme in behalf of the mother of Bruce, and among these he tendered the newly finished "Tam O'Shanter!" He has also ascertained the reason why none of Burns's pieces were added to Bruce's volume. This was "in consequence of the opposition of Dr. Blair and Dr. Moore, who argued that from the moral tendency of Bruce's poetry, the insertion of Burns's 'Alloway Kirk' would be as gross a violation of propriety, as the exhibition of a farce after a tragedy." For that pious reason, "Alloway Kirk," and other poems offered by Burns, were not accepted! In what public estimation *now*, are the writings of Dr. Blair, of Dr. Moore, and even of Michael Bruce, when compared with Burns?

(ⁱ) TO MRS. GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[ELLISLAND, *Feb.* 1791.]

MADAM,— Whether it is that the story of our Mary, Queen, of Scots, has a peculiar effect on the feelings of a poet, or whether I have in the enclosed ballad,* succeeded beyond my usual poetic success, I know not; but it has pleased me beyond any effort of my muse for a good while past; on that account I enclose it particularly to you. It is true, the purity of my motives may be suspected. I am already deeply

* See page 20, *supra*.

indebted to Mr. Graham's goodness ; and, what *in the usual ways of men* is of infinitely greater importance, Mr. G. can do me service of the utmost importance in time to come. I was born a poor dog ; and however I may occasionally pick a better bone than I used to do, I know I must live and die poor : but I will indulge the flattering faith that my poetry will considerably outlive my poverty ; and without any fustian affectation of spirit, I can promise and affirm, that it must be no ordinary craving of the latter shall ever make me do any thing injurious to the honest fame of the former. Whatever may be my failings, for failings are a part of human nature, may they ever be those of a generous heart, and an independent mind. It is no fault of mine that I was born to dependence ; nor is it Mr. Graham's chiefest praise that he can command influence ; but it is his merit to bestow, not only with the kindness of a brother, but with the politeness of a gentleman ; and I trust it shall be mine, to receive with thankfulness, and remember with undiminished gratitude. R. B.

(⁸) TO DR. JOHN MOORE, LONDON.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 27th Feb. 1791.

I DO not know, Sir, whether you are a subscriber to Grose's "Antiquities of Scotland." If you are, the enclosed poem will not be altogether new to you. Captain Grose did me the favor to send me a dozen copies of the proof-sheet, of which this is one. Should you have read the piece before, still this will answer the principal end I have in view : it will give me another opportunity of thanking you for all your goodness to the rustic bard ; and also of shewing you, that

the abilities you have been pleased to commend and patronize are still employed in the way you wish.

The *Elegy on Captain Henderson*, is a tribute to the memory of a man I loved much. Poets have in this the same advantage as Roman Catholics; they can be of no service to their friends after they have past that bourn where all other kindness ceases to be of any avail. Whether, after all, either the one or the other be of any real service to the dead, is, I fear, very problematical; but I am sure they are highly gratifying to the living: and as a very orthodox text, I forget where, in Scripture, says, "whatsoever is not of faith, is sin;" so say I, whatsoever is not detrimental to society, and is of positive enjoyment, is of God, the giver of all good things, and ought to be received and enjoyed by his creatures with thankful delight. As almost all my religious tenets originate from my heart, I am wonderfully pleased with the idea, that I can still keep up a tender intercourse with the dearly beloved friend, or still more dearly beloved mistress, who is gone to the world of spirits.

The ballad on Queen Mary was begun while I was busy with "Percy's Reliques of English Poetry." By the way, how much is every honest heart, which has a tincture of Caledonian prejudice, obliged to you for your glorious story of *Buchanan and Targe*. 'Twas an unequivocal proof of your loyal gallantry of soul, giving "Targe" the victory. I should have been mortified to the ground if you had not.*

* * * * *

I have just read over, once more of many times, your "Zeluco." I marked with my pencil, as I went along, every passage that pleased me particularly above the rest; and one, or two I think, which, with hum-

* The story referred to represents *Buchanan*, a Covenanter, disputing with *Targe*, a Jacobite, about the purity of Mary Queen of Scots. A hand-to-hand fight is the outcome, and the novelist gives the palm to *Targe*.

ble deference, I am disposed to think unequal to the merits of the book. I have sometimes thought to transcribe these marked passages, or at least so much of them as to point where they are, and send them to you. Original strokes that strongly depict the human heart, is your and Fielding's province, beyond any other novelist I have ever perused. Richardson indeed might perhaps be excepted ; but, unhappily, his *dramatis personæ* are beings of some other world ; and however they may captivate the inexperienced, romantic, fancy of a boy or a girl, they will ever, in proportion as we have made human nature our study, dissatisfy our riper years.

As to my private concerns, I am going on, a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the list of excise as a supervisor. I am not yet employed as such, but in a few years I shall fall into the file of supervisorship by seniority. I have had an immense loss in the death of the Earl of Glencairn ; the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise. Independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence ; so soon as the prince's friends had got in (and every dog, you know, has his day), my getting forward in the Excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be. Though this was a consummation devoutly to be wished, yet, thank Heaven, I can live and rhyme as I am ; and as to my boys, poor little fellows ! if I cannot place them on as high an elevation in life, as I could wish, I shall, if I am favored so much of the Disposer of events as to see that period, fix them on as broad and independent a basis as possible. Among the many wise adages which have been treasured up by our Scottish ancestors this is one of the best, *Better be the head o' the commonality, than the tail o' the gentry.*

But I am got on a subject, which, however, interesting to me, is of no manner of consequence to you ; so I shall give you a short poem on the other page, and close this with assuring you how sincerely I have the honor to be, yours &c. R. B.

Written on the blank leaf of a book, which I presented to a very young lady, whom I had formerly characterised under the denomination of THE ROSE-BUD.

(Here was inscribed the Poem at page 49, Vol. III—Beauteous Rose-bud, young and gay.)

The foregoing letter is the last that has been given to the public of Burns's letters to Dr. Moore. That gentleman's reply, dated 29th March 1791, was printed by Dr. Currie. He begins by admitting that the Rev. Mr. Baird had before transmitted to him a copy of the Elegy on Capt. Henderson, and the printed poem on "Alloway Church." His criticisms on these gems of Burns's muse are rather frigid ; and he closes by advising him to avoid the Scottish dialect in his future poems, and make entire use of the modern English : "Why (he asks) should you write only for a part of the island, when you can command the admiration of the whole?" He also requests Burns to favor him with his observations on "Zeluco," and not to suppress his censure, if he any have : "Trust me it will break no squares between us—I am not akin to the Bishop of Grenada."

Burns's copy of "Zeluco" with his pencil observations on the margin, was presented to Mrs. Dunlop. A grandson of hers carried it to the East Indies, where one of the volumes was consumed by the white ants. The other volume (the first) is still preserved, and one of the poet's observations would not have been relished by Dr. Moore. At conclusion of Chap. xii. a lady's maid thus addresses her mistress in support of a bashful suitor for the lady's hand : "Although he is languishing for love of your ladyship, yet rather than open his mouth to you on the subject, he will certainly die."—"Die ! nonsense," cried the widow, "Yes, die !" cried the maid, "and what is worse, die in a dark lanthorn ; at least, I am told that is what he is in danger of." Burns's note is "Rather a bad joke—an unlucky attempt at humor."

On a blank leaf fronting the title-page the poet has inscribed
 "To my much esteemed Friend, Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop.

ROBT. BURNS."

The notes are not very numerous. The book is now in possession of Mr. Wallace Dunlop, C.B., great-grandson of the poet's patroness. To the late Dr. Carruthers of Inverness, we were indebted for this account of the poet's annotated copy of "Zeluco."

(⁹) TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER,

WITH A EWE-MILK CHEESE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, [*March 1791.*] *

MY DEAR HILL,—I shall say nothing at all to your mad present; you have long and often been of important service to me, and I suppose you mean to go on conferring obligations until I shall not be able to lift up my face before you. In the mean time, as Sir Roger de Coverley, because it happened to be a cold day in which he made his will, ordered his servants great coats for mourning; so, because I have been this week plagued with an indigestion, I have sent you by the carrier a fine old ewe-milk cheese.

Indigestion is the devil: nay, 'tis the devil and hell. It besets a man in every one of his senses. I lose my appetite at the sight of successful Knavery; and sicken to loathing at the noise and nonsense of

* The original MS. of this letter is still preserved in Mr. Hill's family, but bears no date: Dr. Currie placed it under "March 1789," no doubt induced to do so by the reference near the close, to "the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct." There is, however, another reference which compels us to place the letter under a later date:—"Candlish, the earliest friend, except my *only* brother, that I have on earth." The poet's brother William was alive till July 1790, and we have taken the earliest probable occasion to introduce the present letter, after that event. The mention of "the King's Arms inn *here*," suggests a date even later.

self-important Folly. When the hollow-hearted wretch takes me by the hand, the feeling spoils my dinner; the proud man's wine so offends my palate that it choaks me in the gullet; and the *pulvilis'd*, feathered, pert coxcomb is so horrible in my nostril that my stomach turns.

If ever you have any of these disagreeable sensations, let me prescribe for your Patience a bit of my Cheese. I know that you are no niggard of your good things among your friends, and some of them are in much need of a slice. There, in my eye, is our friend Smellie; a man positively of the first abilities and greatest strength of mind, as well as one of the best hearts and keenest wits that I have ever met with; when you see him—as, alas! he too often is, smarting at the pinch of distressful circumstance aggravated by the sneer of contumelious greatness, a bit of my cheese alone will not cure him, but if you add a tankard of brown stout, and superadd a magnum of right Oporto, you will see his sorrows vanish like the morning mist before the summer sun.

Candlish, the earliest friend, except my only brother, that I have on earth, and one of the worthiest fellows that ever any man called by the name of Friend, if a luncheon of my cheese would help to rid him of some of his superabundant modesty, you would do well to give it him.

David,* with his “Courant” comes too across my recollection, and I beg you will help him largely from the said ewe-milk cheese, to enable him to digest those damn'd bedaubing paragraphs with which he is eternally larding the lean characters of certain great men in a certain great town. I grant you the periods are very well turned; so, a fresh egg is a very good thing, but when thrown at a man in a pillory, it does

* David Ramsay, already referred to in the letter to Hill of 2nd April 1789. He survived till June 27th, 1813.

not at all improve his figure, not to mention the irreparable loss of the egg.

My facetious little friend, Colonel Dunbar, I would wish also to be a partaker; not to digest his spleen, for that he laughs off, but to digest his last night's wine at the last field-day of the Crochallan corps.

Among our common friends I must not forget one of the dearest of them, Cunningham. The brutality, insolence, and selfishness of a world unworthy of having such a fellow as he in it, I know sticks in his stomach, and if you can help him to any thing that will make him a little easier on that score, it will be very obliging.

As to honest John Somerville,* he is such a contented, happy man, that I know not what can annoy him, except perhaps he may not have got the better of a parcel of modest anecdotes, which a certain poet gave him one night at supper, the last time the said poet was in town.

Though I have mentioned so many men of Law, I shall have nothing to do with them professionally—the Faculty are beyond my prescription. As to their *clients*, that is another thing; God knows they have much to digest!

The clergy I pass by; their profundity of erudition, and their liberality of sentiment; their total want of pride, and their detestation of hypocrisy, are so proverbially notorious as to place them far, far above either my praise or censure.

I was going to mention a man of worth, whom I have the honor to call friend, the Laird of Craigdarroch; but I have spoken to the landlord of the King's

* A confidential friend of Burns, whose name appears as a subscriber for four copies of the Edinburgh edition 1787. The poet presented him with a proof impression of his portrait (Bengo's engraving), which came into the possession of the late Mr. Alex. Russel of the *Scotsman*. Colonel Somerville (a son of the poet's friend) left a large sum of money, many thousands of which will fall to Mr. Russel's family, after the death of a lady annuitant.

Arms inn here, to have at the next county meeting, a large ewe-milk cheese on the table, for the benefit of the Dumfriesshire Whigs, to enable them to digest the Duke of Queensberry's late political conduct.

I have just this moment an opportunity of a private hand to Edinburgh, as perhaps you would not digest double postage.—So, God bless you !

ROB^t. BURNS.

(7) TO MR. ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, WRITER,

ST. JAMES'S SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

(Partly printed by CURRIE, 1800, and completed by DOUGLAS, 1877.*)

ELLISLAND, 11th March 1791.

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM,—I received your *first* letter two days ago ; the last came to hand this moment. I was highly delighted with the well carried on allegory in your friend's letter. I read it to two or three acquaintances who have souls to enjoy a good thing, and we had a very hearty laugh at it. I have felt along the line of my Muse's inclination, and I fear your Archery subject would be up-hill work with her. I have two or three times in my life composed from the wish, rather than from the impulse, but I never succeeded to any purpose. One of these times I shall ever remember with gnashing of teeth. 'Twas on the death of the late Lord President Dundas. My very worthy and most respected friend, Mr. Alex. Wood, Surgeon, urged me to pay a compliment in the way of my trade to his Lordship's memory. Well, to work I went, and produced a copy of Elegiac verses, some of them I own rather common-place, and others rather hide-bound,

* Compared with the MS. in the family of the late James Cunningham, Esq., W. S., Edinburgh, the son of our poet's correspondent, whose death at the venerable age of 78, occurred 1879.

but on the whole, though they were far from being in my best manner, they were tolerable, and might have been thought very clever. I wrote a letter, which however *was* in my very best manner; and inclosing my poem, Mr. Wood carried all together to Mr. Solicitor Dundas that then was, and not finding him at home, left the parcel for him. His Solicitorship never took the smallest notice of the letter, the Poem, or the Poet. From that time, highly as I respect the talents of their family, I never see the name Dundas, in the column of a newspaper, but my heart seems straitened for room in my bosom; and if I am obliged to read aloud a paragraph relating to one of them, I feel my forehead flush, and my nether lip quiver. Had I been an obscure scribbler, as I was then in the hey-day of my fame; or had I been a dependent hanger-on for favor or pay; or had the bearer of the letter been any other than a gentleman who has done honor to the city in which he lives, to the country that produced him, and to the God that created him, Mr. Solicitor might have had some apology—but enough of this ungracious subject.

A friend of mine who transcribed the last parcel I sent you is to be with me in a day or two, and I shall get him to copy out the two poems you mention.* I have this evening sketched out a song which I had a great mind to send you, though I foresee that it will cost you another groat of postage—by the way, you once mentioned to me a method of franking letters to you, but I have forgotten the direction—My song is intended to sing to a strathspey, or reel, of which I am very fond, called in Cumming's collection of Strathspeys, "Ballendalloch's Reel," and in other

* This amanuensis seems to have been the same who about this period transcribed a considerable portion of the poet's unpublished pieces into a bound volume, for Robert Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell. His name has nowhere been stated, but Burns indicates, in a note to a transcript by him of the *Autobiography*, that he was a clergyman or a licentiate of the kirk.

collections that I have met with, it is known by the name of "Camdeltmore." It takes three stanzas of four lines each to go through the whole tune. I shall give the song to Johnson for the fourth vol. of his publication of Scots songs, which he has just now in hand.

SONG.

Sweet are the banks—the banks o' Doon,
The spreading flowers are fair,
And every thing is blythe and glad,
But I am fu' o' care, &c.

See p. 24, supra.

If the foregoing piece be worth your strictures, let me have them. For my own part, a thing that I have composed, always appears through a double portion of that partial medium in which an Author will ever view his own works. I believe in general Novelty has something in it that inebriates the fancy, and not unfrequently dissipates and fumes away like other intoxication, and leaves the poor patient as usual with an aching heart. A striking instance of this might be adduced in the revolution of many a Hymeneal honeymoon. But lest I sink into stupid prose, and so, sacrilegiously intrude on the office of my Parish-priest, who is in himself one vast Constellation of dulness, and from his weekly Zenith, rays out his contradictory stupidity to the no small edification and enlightening of the heavy and opaque Pericraniums of his gaping admirers, I shall fill up the page in my own way, and give you another song of my late composition which will appear in Johnson's work as well as the former. You must know a beautiful Jacobite air—"There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame." When political combustion ceases to be the object of Princes and Patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of Historians and Poets.

SONG.

By yon castle wa', at the close of the day,
 I heard a man sing tho' his head it was grey;
 And as he was singing, the tears down came—
 There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame, &c., &c.

See page 22, supra.

If you like the air, and if the stanzas hit your fancy, you cannot imagine, my dear friend, how much you would oblige me, if, by the charms of your delightful voice, you would give my honest effusion to "the memory of joys that are past," to the few friends whom you indulge in that pleasure. But I have scribbled on till I hear the clock has intimated the near approach of

"That hour, o' night's black arch the key-stane."

So good-night to you! And sound be your sleep, and delectable your dreams. Apropos, how do you like this thought in a ballad I have just now on the tapis?

I look to the west when I gae to rest,
 That happy my dreams and my slumbers may be;
 For far in the west lives he I loe best—
 The man that is dear to my babie and me!

Good night, once more; and God bless you!

ROBT. BURNS.

(7) TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[*March 1791.*]

WHILE here I sit, sad and solitary, by the side of a fire in a little country inn, and drying my wet clothes, in pops a poor fellow of a sodger, and tells me he is going to Ayr. By heavens! say I to myself, with a

tide of good spirits which the magic of that sound
 "Auld Toon o' Ayr" conjured up, I will send my last
 song to Mr. Ballantine. Here it is :

Ye flowery banks o' bonie Doon,
 How can ye blume sae fair?
 How can ye chant, ye little birds,
 And I sae fu' o' care!
 &c. &c.—*See page 25, supra.*

(¹) TO ALEX. DALZIEL, ESQ., FACTOR,

FINDLAYSTON HOUSE.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

ELLISLAND, *March 19, 1791.*

MY DEAR SIR,—I have taken the liberty to frank
 this letter to you, as it incloses an idle poem of mine,
 which I send you ; and, God knows, you may perhaps
 pay dear enough for it, if you read it through. Not
 that this is my own opinion ; but an author, by the
 time he has composed and corrected his works, has
 quite pored away all his powers of critical discrimina-
 tion.

I can easily guess from my own heart, what you
 have felt on a late most melancholy event. God
 knows what I have suffered, at the loss of my best
 friend, my first, my dearest patron and benefactor ; the
 man to whom I owe all that I am and have ! I am
 gone into mourning for him, and with more sincerity
 of grief than I fear some will who by nature's ties
 ought to feel on the occasion.

I will be exceedingly obliged to you indeed, to let
 me know the news of the noble family, how the poor
 mother and the two sisters support their loss. I had
 a packet of poetic bagatelles ready to send to Lady
 Betty, when I saw the fatal tidings in the newspaper.
 I see by the same channel that the honored REMAINS

of my noble patron, are designed to be brought to the family burial place. Dare I trouble you to let me know privately before the day of interment, that I may cross the country, and steal among the crowd, to pay a tear to the last sight of my ever revered benefactor? It will oblige me beyond expression. R. B.

James, fourteenth Earl of Glencairn, the warm-hearted patron of Burns, had sunk into a condition of declining health, and in order to escape the rigor of a Scottish winter had removed to Lisbon in the hope that its milder temperature might prove beneficial. That remedial measure however failed to stay the progress of his disease, and he was advised to return to England; but on his homeward journey he died at Falmouth, near the close of January 1791, in the forty-second year of his age. Burns seems to have addressed the above letter to his lordship's factor, very soon after the first intelligence of the lamented occurrence. He must, however, have been misinformed as to the arrangements respecting the funeral; for the Earl's family possessions in Kilmaurs, including the interesting burial vault, had been sold a few years before his lordship's death, and his remains now lie in the church at Falmouth. His brother John, who succeeded to the earldom, died in 1796, and was interred in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, Edinburgh. At a later period (Aug. 12, 1794), the poet expressed his respect for the memory of his deceased patron by naming his fourth son "James Glencairn Burns."

(ⁱ) TO LADY ELIZABETH CUNNINGHAM.

(CURRIE, 1808.)

[ELLISLAND, *March* 1791.]

MY LADY,—I would, as usual, have availed myself of the privilege your goodness has allowed me, of sending you any thing I compose in my poetical way; but as I had resolved, so soon as the shock of my irreparable loss would allow me, to pay a tribute to my late benefactor, I determined to make that the

first piece I should do myself the honor of sending you. Had the wing of my fancy been equal to the ardor of my heart, the inclosed had been much more worthy your perusal :* as it is, I beg leave to lay it at your ladyship's feet. As all the world knows my obligations to the late Earl of Glencairn, I would wish to shew as openly that my heart glows, and shall ever glow, with the most grateful sense and remembrance of his lordship's goodness. The sables I did myself the honor to wear to his lordship's memory, were not the "mockery of woe." Nor shall my gratitude perish with me!—If, among my children, I shall have a son that has a heart, he shall hand it down to his child as a family honor and a family debt, that my dearest existence I owe to the noble house of Glencairn !

I was about to say, my lady, that if you think the poem may venture to see the light, I would, in some way or other, give it to the world. R. B.

(31) TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 11th April, 1791.

I AM once more able, my honored friend, to return you, with my own hand, thanks for the many instances of your friendship, and particularly for your kind anxiety in this last disaster that my evil genius had in store for me. However, life is chequered—joy and sorrow—for on Saturday morning last, Mrs. Burns made me a present of a fine boy ;† rather stouter, but not so handsome as your godson was at his time of life. Indeed I look on your little namesake to be

* "Lament for James, Earl of Glencairn," page 28, *supra*.

† On April 9th, 1791, the poet's third son Wm. Nicol Burns was born.

my *chef d'œuvre* in that species of manufacture, as I look on "Tam O'Shanter" to be my standard performance in the poetical line. 'Tis true, both the one and the other discover a spice of roguish waggery, that might perhaps be as well spared ; but then they also show, in my opinion, a force of genius and a finishing polish, that I despair of ever excelling. Mrs. Burns is getting stout again, and laid as lustily about her to-day at breakfast, as a reaper from the corn-ridge. That is the peculiar privilege and blessing of our hale, sprightly damsels, that are bred among the *hay and heather*. We cannot hope for that highly polished mind, that charming delicacy of soul, which is found among the female world in the more elevated stations of life, and which is certainly by far the most bewitching charm in the famous cestus of Venus. It is indeed such an inestimable treasure, that where it can be had in its native heavenly purity, unstained by some one or other of the many shades of affectation, and unalloyed by some one or other of the many species of caprice, I declare to Heaven, I should think it cheaply purchased at the expense of every other earthly good ! But as this angelic creature is, I am afraid, extremely rare in any station and rank of life, and totally denied to such a humble one as mine, we meaner mortals must put up with the next rank of female excellence. As fine a figure and face we can produce as any rank of life whatever ; rustic, native grace ; unaffected modesty, and unsullied purity ; nature's mother-wit, and the rudiments of taste ; a simplicity of soul, unsuspecting of, because unacquainted with, the crooked ways of a selfish, interested, disingenuous world ; and the dearest charm of all the rest—a yielding sweetness of disposition, and a generous warmth of heart, grateful for love on our part, and ardently glowing with a more than equal return ; these, with a healthy frame, a sound, vigorous constitution,

which your higher ranks can scarcely ever hope to enjoy, are the charms of lovely woman in my humble walk of life.

This is the greatest effort my broken arm has yet made.* Do let me hear, by first post, how cher petit Monsieur † comes on with his small pox. May Almighty goodness preserve and restore him! R. B.

(¹) TO ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, *April*, 1791.

SIR—Nothing less than the unfortunate accident I have met with, could have prevented my grateful acknowledgements for your letters. His own favorite poem, and that an essay in a walk of the muses entirely new to him, where consequently his hopes and fears were on the most anxious alarm for his success in the attempt—to have that poem so much applauded by one of the first judges, was the most delicious vibration that ever trilled along the heart-strings of a poor poet. However, Providence, to keep up the proper proportion of evil with the good, which it seems is necessary in this sublunary state, thought proper to check my exultation by a very serious misfortune. A day or two after I received your letter, my

* The letter to Mrs. Dunlop of 7th February preceding, announced the writer's convalescence after a fall with his horse in January. On that occasion, his arm was bruised, but not very severely. It appears from the present letter, and two or three which follow, that through a similar accident, towards the end of March his right arm was broken, and we find him complaining of the consequences down to nearly the end of April. In a letter to Peter Hill dated about Midsummer of the same year, he complains of "a bruised leg;" and again on 6th October thereafter, in a letter to Mr. Graham of Fintry, as well as in his poetical epistle to him, he refers to his bruised leg, and "a sheetful of groans wrung from him in his elbow-chair, with one unlucky foot on a stool before him." The year 1791, therefore, was an unlucky one for the poet's limbs.

† The child of Mrs. Henri, daughter of Mrs. Dunlop.

horse came down with me and broke my right arm. As this is the first service my arm has done me since its disaster, I find myself unable to do more than just in general terms to thank you for this additional instance of your patronage and friendship. As to the faults you detected in the piece, they are truly there ; one of them, the hit at the lawyer and priest, I shall cut out ; as to the falling off in the catastrophe, for the reason you justly adduce, it cannot easily be remedied.* Your approbation, Sir, has given me such additional spirits to persevere in this species of poetic composition, that I am already revolving two or three stories in my fancy. If I can bring these floating ideas to bear any kind of embodied form, it will give me an additional opportunity of assuring you how much I have the honor to be, &c. R. B.

* Mr. Tytler's letter to Burns containing a critique, moderately appreciative of *Tam O'Shanter*, is dated 12th March 1791, but it may not have reached the poet for several days after its date. The only fault he pointed out applied to "the winding-up, or conclusion of the story, as not being commensurate to the interest which is excited by the descriptive painting of the preceding parts.—The result (he said) is not adequate to the fine preparation ; but for this you have a good apology—you stick to the popular tale." Four lines he judiciously recommended to be suppressed as "they derive all their merit from the satire they contain, and seem really misplaced among the circumstances of pure horror." Burns listened to that advice, the lines being the following :—

" Three Lawyer's tongues turn'd inside out,
Wi' lies seem'd like a beggar's clout ;
And priest's hearts, rotten, black as muck,
Lay stinking, vile, in every neuk."

(¹) TO CHARLES SHARPE, ESQ., OF HODDAM,
UNDER A FICTITIOUS SIGNATURE, ENCLOSING A
BALLAD.

(CURRIE, 1801.)

ELLISLAND, 22nd April 1791.*

IT is true, Sir, you are a gentleman of rank and fortune, and I am a poor devil ; you are a feather in the cap of society, and I am a very hobnail in his shoes ; yet I have the honor to belong to the same family with you, and on that score I now address you. You will perhaps suspect that I am going to claim affinity with the ancient and honorable house of Kirkpatrick. No, no, Sir : I cannot indeed be properly said to belong to any house, or even any province or kingdom ; as my mother, who for many years was spouse to a marching regiment, gave me into this bad world, aboard the packet-boat, somewhere between Donaghadee and Portpatrick. By our common family, I mean, Sir, the family of the Muses. I am a fiddler, and a poet ; and you, I am told, play an exquisite violin, and have a standard taste in the *Belles Lettres*. The other day, a brother-catgut gave me a charming Scots air of your composition. If I was pleased with the tune, I was in raptures with the title you have given it ; and taking up the idea I have spun it into the three stanzas enclosed.† Will you allow me, Sir, to present you them, as the dearest offering that a misbegotten son of Poverty and Rhyme has to give ! I have a longing to take you by the hand, and unburden my heart by saying : “ Sir, I honor you as a man who supports the dignity of human nature amid

* This is the date attached by Burns to the letter, in his transcript of it in the Glenriddell MSS.

† The verses referred to have not been given, or indicated, in connexion with this clever effusion,

an age when frivolity and avarice have, between them, debased us below the brutes that perish!" But, alas! Sir, to me you are unapproachable. It is true the Muses baptised me in Castalian streams; but the thoughtless gipsies forgot to give me a name. As the sex have served many a good fellow, the Nine have given me a great deal of pleasure; but, bewitching jades! they have beggared me. Would they but spare me a little of their cast linen! were it only to put it in my power to say that I have a shirt on my back! But the idle wenches, like Solomon's lilies, "they toil not, neither do they spin;" so I must e'en continue to tie my remnant of a cravat, like the hangman's rope, round my naked throat, and coax my galligaskins to keep together their many-colored fragments. As to the affair of shoes, I have given that up. My pilgrimages in my ballad-trade, from town to town, and on your stony-hearted turnpikes too, are what not even the hide of Job's Behemoth could bear. The coat on my back is no more: I shall not speak evil of the dead. It would be equally unhandsome and ungrateful to find fault with my old surtout, which so kindly supplies and conceals the want of that coat. My hat indeed is a great favorite; and though I got it literally for an old song, I would not exchange it for the best beaver in Britain. I was, during several years, a kind of fac-totum servant to a country clergyman, where I pickt up a good many scraps of learning, particularly in some branches of the mathematics. Whenever I feel inclined to rest myself on my way, I take my seat under a hedge, laying my poetic wallet on the one side, and my fiddle-case on the other, and placing my hat between my legs, I can, by means of its brim, or rather brims, go through the whole doctrine of the conic sections.

However, Sir, don't let me mislead you, as if I would interest your pity. Fortune has so much for-

saken me, that she has taught me to live without her; and amid all my rags and poverty, I am as independent, and much more happy, than a monarch of the world. According to the hackneyed metaphor, I value the several actors in the great drama of life, simply as they act their parts. I can look on a worthless fellow of a duke with unqualified contempt, and can regard an honest scavenger with sincere respect.* As you, Sir, go through your rôle with such distinguished merit, permit me to make one in the chorus of universal applause, and assure you that with the highest respect,—I have the honor to be, &c.

JOHNNY FAA.

(²) TO LADY WINIFRED MAXWELL.
CONSTABLE.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[*April 1791.*]

MY LADY,—Nothing less than the unlucky accident of having lately broken my right arm, could have prevented me, the moment I received your Ladyship's elegant present by Mrs. Miller,† from returning you my warmest and most grateful acknowledgments. I assure your Ladyship, I shall set it apart—the symbols of Religion shall only be more sacred. In the moment of poetic composition, the box shall be my inspiring genius. When I would breathe the comprehensive wish of benevolence for the happiness of

* Several of the author's favorite sentiments are expressed through the medium of this humorous letter, which in style reminds one of some of Goldsmith's essays. The reader may remember that in former parts of this correspondence, Professor Dugald Stewart and Bishop Geddes are complimented by Burns, as having been the sole instances of manhood he ever met, who "value the several actors in the great drama of life precisely as they play their parts."

† The present referred to was a valuable snuff-box, containing on the lid a beautiful inlaid miniature of Queen Mary, which unfortunately was irreparably damaged in India while in the possession of one of the poet's sons.

others, I shall recollect your Ladyship ; when I would interest my fancy in the distresses incident to humanity, I shall remember the unfortunate Mary. I enclose your Ladyship a poetic compliment I lately paid to the memory of our greatly injured, lovely Scottish Queen.*—I have the honor to be, my Lady, your Ladyship's highly obliged and ever devoted, humble servant,

ROBT BURNS.

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 25th April 1791.

POEMS WRITTEN BY MR. ROBERT BURNS,

AND SELECTED BY HIM FROM HIS UNPRINTED COLLECTION, FOR ROBERT RIDDELL, OF GLENRIDDELL, ESQ.

PREFACE.

As this collection almost wholly consists of pieces local, or unfinished fragments—the effusion of a poetical moment, and bagatelles strung in rhyme simply *pour passer le temps*, the Author trusts that nobody into whose hands it may come, will, without his permission, give, or allow to be taken, copies of anything here contained ; much less to give to the world at large, what he never meant should see the light. At the Gentleman's request, whose from this time it shall be, the Collection was made ; and to him, and I will add, to his amiable Lady, it is presented as a sincere though small tribute of gratitude for the many happy hours the Author has spent under their roof. *There*, what Poverty, even though accompanied with

* The holograph of this letter is in the Hastie collection at the British Museum. Dr. Currie withheld the closing words, through what motive it is difficult to conjecture ; but the omission misled Allan Cunningham into the blunder of saying that the poem called "The Lament of Mary Queen of Scots" was composed at the request of Lady Constable, who rewarded him for it, by presenting the beautiful box referred to. The reverse of this seems to have been the order of cause and effect.

Genius, must seldom expect to meet with at the tables and in the circles of Fashionable Life, his welcome has ever been the cordiality of kindness and the warmth of Friendship. As from the situation in which it is now placed, this MS. may be preserved, and this Preface read, when the hand that now writes, and the heart that now dictates it, may be mouldering in the dust; let these be regarded as the genuine sentiments of a man who seldom flattered any, and never those he loved.

ROBT. BURNS.

27th April 1791.

The whole of the poems, songs, and fragments embraced in the above MS. collection, have now been published—the more important of these having been printed by the Author himself in his enlarged edition of February 1793. In 1874, Henry A. Bright, Esq., Merchant, Liverpool, produced a small quarto volume, printed for private circulation, giving some account of the Glenriddell manuscripts, embracing a complete list of them, and copies of any that then remained unpublished. He executed his generous undertaking with rare taste; and to him we are thankfully beholden for the use of his labors in the present work.

The volume which contains those manuscript poems, and also a companion volume of letters, appear to have been handed back to Burns after the death of Mr. Riddell in April 1794; and when Dr. Currie undertook to edit the great Liverpool edition of our author's works for the benefit of his widow and family, the volumes were lodged with him as part of his materials.

Mr. Bright records that in 1853 the widow of Mr. Wallace Currie (son of Dr. Currie, the poet's biographer), presented to the Athenæum Library, at Liverpool, those two interesting volumes; but that down to 1873 they were so carefully preserved in a locked chest, that very few even of the proprietors of the Library knew of their existence. At his suggestion, they were placed within a glass case in the library, for inspection of the public, subject to the regulations of the institution.

At a future stage of this work we shall give some account of the Prose volume referred to.

(¹) TO SIR JOHN SINCLAIR, OF ULBSTER,
BART.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

ELLISLAND, 1791.

SIR,—The following circumstance has, I believe, been omitted in the statistical account, transmitted to you, of the parish of Dunscore, in Nithsdale. I beg leave to send it to you, because it is new and may be useful. How far it is deserving of a place in your patriotic publication, you are the best judge.

To store the minds of the lower classes with useful knowledge, is certainly of great importance, both to them as individuals, and to society at large. Giving them a turn for reading and reflection, is giving them a source of innocent and laudable amusement; and besides raises them to a more dignified degree in the scale of rationality. Impressed with this idea, a gentleman in this parish, Robert Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell, set on foot a species of circulating library, on a plan so simple as to be practicable in any corner of the country; and so useful, as to deserve the notice of every country gentleman, who thinks the improvement of that part of his own species, whom chance has thrown into the humble walks of the peasant and the artisan, a matter worthy of his attention.

Mr. Riddell got a number of his own tenants, and farming neighbors, to form themselves into a society for the purpose of having a library among themselves. They entered into a legal engagement to abide by it for three years; with a saving clause or two, in case of removal to a distance, or of death. Each member, at his entry, paid five shillings: and at each of their meetings, which were held every fourth Saturday, sixpence more. With their entry-money, and the credit which they took on the faith of their future

funds, they laid in a tolerable stock of books at the commencement. What authors they were to purchase, was always decided by the majority. At every meeting, all the books, under certain fines and forfeitures, by way of penalty, were to be produced; and the members had their choice of the volumes in rotation. He whose name stood for that night, first on the list, had his choice of what volume he pleased in the whole collection; the second had his choice after the first; the third after the second, and so on to the last. At next meeting, he who had been first on the list at the preceding meeting, was last at this; he who had been second was first; and so on through the whole three years. At the expiration of the engagement, the books were sold by auction, but only among the members themselves; and each man had his share of the common stock, in money or in books, as he chose to be a purchaser or not.

At the breaking up of this little society, which was formed under Mr. Riddell's patronage, what with benefactions of books from him, and what with their own purchases, they had collected together upwards of one hundred and fifty volumes. It will easily be guessed, that a good deal of trash would be bought. Among the books, however, of this little library, were, *Blair's Sermons*, *Robertson's History of Scotland*, *Hume's History of the Stewarts*, *The Spectator*, *Idler*, *Adventurer*, *Mirror*, *Lounger*, *Observer*, *Man of Feeling*, *Man of the World*, *Chrysal*, *Don Quixote*, *Joseph Andrews*, &c. A peasant who can read, and enjoy such books, is certainly a much superior being to his neighbor, who perhaps stalks beside his team, very little removed, except in shape, from the brutes he drives.

Wishing your patriotic exertions their so much merited success,—I am, Sir, your humble servant,

A PEASANT.*

* The above is extracted from the third volume of Sir John Sinclair's Statistics,

TO —————.

(CURRIE, 1801.)

[ELLISLAND, 1791.]

DEAR SIR,—I am exceedingly to blame in not writing you long ago ; but the truth is, that I am the most indolent of all human beings, and when I matriculate in the Herald's Office, I intend that my supporters shall be two sloths ; my crest, a slow-worm ; and the motto, "Deil tak' the foremost." So much by way of apology for not thanking you sooner for your kind execution of my commission.

I would have sent you the poem ; but somehow or other it found its way into the public paper, where you must have seen it.*

* * * * *

I am ever, dear Sir, yours sincerely,

ROBERT BURNS.

TO (PROBABLY) WM. NICOL,

OF THE HIGH SCHOOL, EDINBURGH.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

THOU Eunuch of language : thou Englishman, who never was south of the Tweed : thou servile echo of

p. 598.—It was enclosed to Sir John by Mr. Riddell himself in the following letter, also printed there:—"SIR JOHN—I enclose you a letter written by Mr. Burns, as an addition to the account of Dunscore parish. It contains an account of a small library which he was so good (at my desire) as to set on foot, in the barony of Monkland (or Friar's Carse), in this parish. As its utility has been felt, particularly among the younger class of people, I think, that if a similar plan were established, in the different parishes of Scotland, it would tend greatly to the speedy improvement of the tenantry, trades people, and work people. Mr. Burns was so good as to take the whole charge of this small concern. He was treasurer, librarian, and censor, to this little society, who will long have a grateful sense of his public spirit and exertions for their improvement and information.

"I have the honor to be, Sir John, yours most sincerely, ROBERT RIDDELL."

* It is supposed that the poem here referred to was the "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots." If so, the date would be about May 1791.

fashionable barbarisms : thou quack, vending the nostrums of empirical elocution : thou marriage-maker between vowels and consonants, on the Gretna-green of caprice : thou cobbler, botching the flimsy socks of bombast oratory : thou blacksmith, hammering the rivets of absurdity : thou butcher, embruing thy hands in the bowels of orthography : thou arch-heretic in pronunciation : thou pitch-pipe of affected emphasis : thou carpenter, mortising the awkward joints of jarring sentences : thou squeaking dissonance of cadence : thou pimp of gender : thou Lyon Herald to silly etymology : thou antipode of grammar : thou executioner of construction : thou brood of the speech-distracting builders of the Tower of Babel : thou lingual confusion worse confounded : thou scape-gallows from the land of syntax : thou scavenger of mood and tense : thou murderous accoucheur of infant learning : thou *ignus fatuus*, misleading the steps of benighted ignorance : thou pickle-herring in the puppet-show of nonsense : thou faithful recorder of barbarous idiom : thou persecutor of syllabication : thou baleful meteor, foretelling and facilitating the rapid approach of Nox and Erebus.*

(¹) TO MR. JOHN SOMERVILLE, WRITER,
EDINBURGH.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

ELLISLAND, NEAR DUMFRIES, 11th May 1791.

ALLOW me, my dear Sir, to introduce a Mr. Lorimer, a particular friend of mine, to your acquaintance, as a

* This singular composition made its appearance in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for August 1832, without date or signature. The original MS. was in the possession of Mr. Andrew Henderson, Surgeon, Berwick-upon-Tweed, one of the sons of Mrs. Henderson of Jedburgh, daughter of Mr. Wm. Cruikshank, High School, Edinburgh.

gentleman worth your knowing, both as a man and (what is case in point), as a man of property and consequence, who goes to town just now, to advise with and employ an Agent in some law-business. By way of serving him, I put him in the best hands when I introduce him to Mr. Somerville. My kindest compliments to Mrs. Somerville, little Harry, and all your little folks. By the way, about ten months ago, I collected * * * * a little fellow, whom, for strength, size, figure, and pitch of note, I will match against any boy in Nithsdale, Annandale, or any dale whatever. So, in a mug of porter, here goes the Gudewife o' Diltammies' toast—"The Gudeman an' the bill! for they keep a' the toun in milk." Yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

The above curious fragment we print from a newspaper cutting of unknown date; a footnote intimates that the seal of the letter is of black wax, bearing the impression of a heart transpierced by two cross arrows, and explains in reference to the portion represented by asterisks that "our compositor either cannot or will not make it out."

The gentleman to whom the letter is addressed has already been introduced to the reader in the poet's letter to Peter Hill, page 241 *supra*. Here we have the earliest reference to the Lorimer family which occurs in the bard's correspondence. His intercourse with them began when he commenced his excise practice near the close of 1789. The eldest daughter, Jean (born in 1775), who was destined to become the "Chloris" of Burns, was then bursting into precocious womanhood. Already had her charms prompted his muse to make her the subject of a song in which he vicariously wooed her for a brother exciseman; and the names "Jean Lorimer" and "John Gillespie" were engraved on the window panes at Ellisland. The ingenious reader will be at small loss to unriddle the mysterious allusions in the latter part of the above fragment. They undoubtedly refer to the conception and birth of William Nicol Burns, the poet's third son, who first saw daylight about one month prior to the date of this communication to Somerville. Thus—Tristram Shandy-like—the history of Colonel William

Nicol Burns begins nine months before his birth-date in the calendar !

The black seal on the letter, with its symbolic impression, is also pregnant with meaning. No single love affection was capable of filling the heart of Burns ; although in his poetic rapture of 1786, when Jean deserted him, he asserted otherwise—

“This breast, how dreary now and void,
For her too scanty once of room.”

Precisely nine days prior to the birth spoken of in the letter to Mr. Somerville, the poet's “Anna of the gowden-locks” was delivered of a daughter who, a few weeks after birth, was conveyed to Ellisland by pre-arrangement, and there suckled at the same breast which fed the stout infant boy above referred to. Of all Burns's children, this second “dear-bought Bess” (for the mother's life was the cost of that birth) the most resembled him in features. To this subject, Robert Chambers has devoted a page or two of generous pleading in behalf of Burns, in which the leading defence is a reflection on Jean's alleged imprudence in absenting herself from the domestic couch during one or more prolonged visits to Ayrshire. Alas ! where there is a will there is a way Mrs. Burns was certainly not in Ayrshire, or beyond her husband's reach, in June and July 1790, nor was she absent from Ellisland at any time before the summer of 1791, so far as appears from the records laid before the public by the poet's biographers.* To countenance his statement, Chambers quotes an alleged saying of the poet's sister Agnes, who superintended the dairy department at Ellisland for a short period :—“I never knew my brother fail to keep good hours at night until Jean's first unlucky absence in Ayrshire.” The reader must here be given to understand that this sagacious sister of Burns was the identical “Nannie” of whom another saying is quoted :—“I wonder what gars our Robert make such a wark about the lasses ! For my part, I wad na gie ae lad for half a dizen o' them.”

* Jean's first summer at Ellisland was that of 1789, when her son Francis Wallace was born. That event happened in August, and she was attended by the poet's mother, who journeyed to Dumfriesshire for the occasion. Jean was not absent in October thereafter, when the verses to “Mary in Heaven” were composed. The correspondence shews her to have remained at Ellisland during the first half of 1790, and during the latter half her presence there is fully certified, by the accounts of summer visitors, followed by her own description of Burns, while in the act of composing “Tam O'Shanter.”

(2) TO MR. ALEX. FINDLATER, SUPERVISOR
OF EXCISE.

(DR. WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)*

[ELLISLAND, *June*, 1791.]

DEAR SIR,—I am both much surprised and vexed at that accident of Lorimer's stock. The last survey I made prior to Mr. Lorimer's going to Edinburgh, I was very particular in my inspection, and the quantity was certainly in his possession, as I stated it. The surveys I made during his absence might as well have been marked "Key absent," as I never found any body but the lady, who I know is not mistress of keys, &c., to know anything of it, and one of the times, it would have rejoiced all Hell to have seen her so drunk. I have not surveyed there since his return. I know the gentleman's ways are, like the grace of G—, past all comprehension; but I shall give the house a severe scrutiny to-morrow morning, and send you in the naked facts.

I know, Sir, and regret deeply that this business glances with a malign aspect on my character as an officer; but as I am really innocent in the affair, and as the gentleman is known to be an illicit dealer, and particularly as this is the *single* instance of the least shadow of carelessness or impropriety in my conduct as an officer, I shall be peculiarly unfortunate if my character shall fall a sacrifice to the dark manœuvres of a smuggler. I am, Sir, your obliged and obedient humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

Sunday even.

* This undated letter was first made known in its entire form at Dumfries, by the Secretary of the Burns Club there, in 1869. Mr. Findlater had printed the second paragraph in 1814.

I send you some rhymes I have just finished which tickle my fancy a little.

The above picture of a smuggler's house at Cairnmill, Kemishall, forms a strange comment on the poet's character of the man, in the immediately preceding letter, addressed to Mr. Somerville—"a gentleman worth your knowing, both as a man, and as a man of property and consequence!" It is said that eventually he was engulfed in bankruptcy; but we have evidence that Mr. and Mrs. Burns continued to be on the most intimate terms with him and his eldest daughter till within a year of the poet's death. Mrs. Burns, in her conversations with Mr. M'Diarmid, thus speaks of the family:—"Jean Lorimer was the daughter of Wm. Lorimer, farmer at Kemishall, and in good circumstances. He had two daughters and three sons. His wife was given to drinking, and that injured her daughters. Jean used to visit at Ellisland; she had remarkably fair hair, and was perfectly virtuous. She took the fancy of an Englishman at a Moffat Ball, and was married to him at Gretna Green. The man was a reprobate; but his mother allowed her an annuity." Chambers gives the date of that marriage as being March 1793.

(⁸) TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.,
EDINBURGH,

INTRODUCING CLARKE THE SCHOOLMASTER.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

11th June, 1791.

Let me interest you, my dear Cunningham, in behalf of the gentleman who gives you this. He is a Mr. Clarke, of Moffat, principal schoolmaster there, and is at present suffering severely under the persecution of one or two powerful individuals of his employers. He is accused of harshness to some perverse dunces that were placed under his care. God help the teacher, if a man of genius and sensibility, for such is my friend Clarke—when a blockhead father presents him his booby son, and insists on having the

rays of science lighted up in a fellow's head whose skull is impervious and inaccessible, by any other way than a positive fracture with a cudgel : a fellow whom in fact it savors of impiety to attempt making a scholar of, as he has been marked a blockhead in the book of fate, at the almighty fiat of his Creator.

The patrons of Moffat School are, the ministers, magistrates, and town-council of Edinburgh, and as the business comes now before them, let me beg my dearest friend to do every thing in his power to serve the interests of a man of genius, a man of worth, and a man whom I particularly respect and esteem. You know some good fellows among the magistrates and council, though, God knows, 'tis generally a very unfit soil for good fellowship to flourish in, but particularly you have much to say with a reverend gentleman to whom you have the honor of being very nearly related, and whom this country and age have had the honor to produce. I need not name the historian of Charles V.* I tell him through the medium of his nephew's influence, that Mr. Clarke is a gentleman who will not disgrace even his patronization. I know the merits of the cause thoroughly, and I say it, that my friend is falling a sacrifice to prejudiced ignorance, and envious, causeless malice.

God help the children of dependence ! Hated and persecuted by their enemies, and too often (alas ! almost unexceptionally always) received by their friends with insulting disrespect and heart-stinging reproach, under the thin disguise of cold civility and humiliating advice. O ! to be a sturdy savage, stalking in the pride of his independence, amid the solitary wilds of his deserts ; rather than in civilized life, helplessly to tremble for a subsistence, precarious as the caprice of a fellow-creature ! Every man has his

* Dr. Robertson, the historian, was Cunningham's uncle.

virtues, and no man is without his failings; and curse on that privileged plain-dealing of friendship, which, in the hour of my calamity, cannot reach forth the helping hand without at the same time pointing out those failings, and assigning their share in my present distress. My friends, for such the world calls you, and such ye think yourselves to be, pass by my virtues if you please, but do also spare my follies: the first will witness in my breast for themselves, and the last will give pain enough to the ingenuous mind without you. And since deviating more or less from the paths of propriety and rectitude must be incident to human nature, do thou, Fortune, put it in my power, always from my own pocket, to pay the penalty of those errors! I do not want to be independent that I may sin, but I want to be independent in my sinning.

To return in this rambling letter to the subject I set out with, let me recommend my friend Clarke to your acquaintance and good offices; his worth entitles him to the one, and his gratitude will merit the other.

R. B.

The variations in our text from Currie's version of the above letter are taken from the Glenriddell MS. Chambers remarks concerning it, that "there is a condition of great suffering when, though the main source of grief cannot be spoken of, smaller evils will be denounced with a superfluity of splenetic effusion not a little startling to a bystander." Burns here, while merely sympathizing with a persecuted schoolmaster, launches out into an indignant protest against the friendship which would venture to preach against a man's errors or failings, while kindly endeavoring to redeem their consequences. The exasperation of spirit and occasional acrimony which his letters manifest again and again, from this period of his career, seem to have been caused more by the reckless violence of his own passions, with their bitter after-fruits, than from disappointed ambition or social disregard of any kind. The cause of his unfortunate friend Clarke he seems to have taken up as a pet subject, as will be evinced from several hitherto suppressed letters on that topic now here made public.

(¹) TO THE REV. WILLIAM MOODIE, EDIN-
BURGH.*

(DOUGLAS 1877.)

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—This will be presented to you by a particular friend of mine, a Mr. Clarke, schoolmaster in Moffat, who has lately become the unfortunate and undeserved subject of persecution from some of his employers. The ostensible and assigned reason on their part is some instances of severity to the boys under his care ; but I have had the best means of knowing the merits of the cause, and I assure you, Sir, that he is falling a sacrifice to the weakness of the many, following in the cry of the villainy of the few.

The business will now come before the patrons of the school, who are the ministers, magistrates, and town council of Edinburgh ; and in that view I would interest your goodness in his behalf. 'Tis true, Sir, and I feel the full force of the observation, that a man in my powerless, humble situation very much mistakes himself, and very much mistakes the way of the world, when he dares presume to offer influence among so highly respectable a body as the patronage I have mentioned. On that—what could I do? A man of abilities, a man of genius, a man of worth, and my friend—before I would stand quietly and silently by, and see him perish thus, I would go down on my knees to the rocks and mountains, and implore them to fall on his persecutors and crush their malice and them in deserved destruction. Believe me, Sir, he is a greatly injured man.

* This clergyman was translated from Kirkcaldy to St. Andrew's Church, Edinburgh, in 1787, while Burns resided in the city and became acquainted with him. In 1793, he was appointed Professor of Hebrew and the Eastern languages. He died in 1812, and was succeeded in the Professorship by the celebrated Dr. Murray.

The humblest individual, though, alas, he cannot so redress the wrong, may yet as ably attest the fact as a lord might do. Mr. Moodie's goodness I well know, and that acquaintance with him that I have the honor to boast of will forgive my addressing him thus in favor of a gentleman whom, if he knew as well, he would esteem as I do. R. B.

LETTER DICTATED FOR CLARKE, AD-
DRESSED TO THE LORD PROVOST
OF EDINBURGH.

(DOUGLAS,* 1877.)

MY LORD,—It may be deemed presumption in a man obscure and unknown as I am, and entire stranger to your Lordship, to trouble you in this manner; but when I inform you that the subject on which I address you is of the last importance to me, and is so far connected with you, that on your determination, in a great measure, my fate must depend, I rely on your Lordship's goodness that you will think any farther apology unnecessary.

I have been for nearly five years Schoolmaster in Moffat, an appointment of which your Lordship will know, you, with the rest of the Magistracy and Town Council, together with the Clergy of Edinburgh, have the patronage. The trust with which these, my highly respectable patrons had honored me, I have endeavored to discharge with the utmost fidelity, and I hope with a good degree of success; but of late, one or two powerful individuals† of my employers

* This letter is inserted in the Glenriddell MS. volume at Liverpool, with a heading by our bard, thus :—"The following letter, which was sent by Mr. Clarke to the Provost of Edinburgh, was of my writing."

† The "one or two powerful individuals" referred to seem to have enlisted the sympathies of the Earl of Hopetoun, who, as superior of the ground on which the school stood, or by some other influence, during the summer vacation, applied to the court for an interdict against Clarke's re-opening it.

have been pleased to attack my reputation as a Teacher, have threatened no less than to expel me from the School, and are taking every method, some of them, I will say it, insidious and unfair to the last degree, to put their threats in execution. The fault of which I am accused is some instances of severity to the children under my care. Were I to tell your Lordship that I am innocent of the charge—that any shade of cruelty, particularly that very black one of cruelty to tender infancy, will be allowed by every unbiassed person who knows anything of me to be tints unknown in my disposition ; you would certainly look on all this *from me* as words of course ; so I shall trouble you with nothing on the merits of my cause, until I have a fair hearing before my R^t. Hon^{ble}. Patrons. A fair hearing, my Lord, is what above all things I want ; and what I greatly fear will be attempted to be denied me. It is to be insinuated that I have vacated my place, that I never was legally appointed, with I know not how many pretences more, to hinder the business from coming properly before your Lordship and the other Patrons of the School—all which I deny, and will insist on holding my appointment until the dignified characters who gave it me shall find me unworthy of it.

In your Lordship's great acquaintance with human life, you must have known and seen many instances of Innocence, nay, of Merit, disguised and obscured, and sometimes for ever buried, by the dark machinations of unprincipled Malevolence, and envious Craft ; and until the contrary be made to appear, 'tis at least equally probable that my case is in that unfortunate and undeserved predicament.—I have the honor to be, &c.

(Signed)

JAMES CLARKE.

(²) TO JOHN MITCHELL, ESQ.,

COLLECTOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

[ELLISLAND, 16th June 1791.]

SIR,—A very pressing occasion, no less than witnessing the wedding of an only brother, calls me to Ayrshire, for which I shall take your permission as granted, except I be countermanded before Sunday, the day I set out. I shall remember that three days are all that I can expect. The enclosed official paper came to my hand, and I take the liberty to lay it before you.—I have the honor to be your obliged, humble servt.

ROBT. BURNS.

Mr. Gilbert Burns, farmer, then of Mossgiel, was married to Miss Jean Breckenridge at Kilmarnock on 21st June 1791. The eldest child of the marriage, William Burns, who was born at Mossgiel on 15th May 1792, is now (1878) alive at Portarlinton in Ireland. A younger brother, Gilbert, long a member of the large dry goods house of Todd & Burns (1880) born in 1803, also survives in Dublin. A sister, Anne Burns, born in 1805 is also still alive; and these are all that remain of eleven children, the issue of the marriage referred to in the poet's letter.

Gilbert, the poet's brother, died in April 1827, and his wife in September, 1841.

(¹⁰) TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

[June, 1791.]†

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I take Glenriddell's kind offer of a corner for a postscript to you, though I have got

* The poet's holograph of this short letter is in possession of D. Lyell, Esq., W. S., Edinburgh, to whom we are indebted for its use.

† The original letter preserved in Mr. Hill's family has no date in the poet's

nothing particular to tell you. It is with the greatest pleasure I learn from all hands, and particularly from your warm friend and patron, the Laird here, that you are going on, spreading and thriving like a Palm tree that shades the fragrant vale in the Holy Land of the Prophet. May the richest juices from beneath, and the dews of heaven from above, foster your root and refresh your branches, until you be as conspicuous among your fellows as the stately Goliath towering over the little pigmy Philistines around him ! Amen ! so be it !!!

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹) TO MISS DAVIES,

ENCLOSING A BALLAD MADE UPON HER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

[Aug. 1791.]

MADAM,—I understand my very worthy neighbor, Mr. Riddell, has informed you that I have made you the subject of some verses. There is something [so provoking]* in the idea of being the burden of a ballad that I do not think Job or Moses, though such patterns of patience and meekness, could have resisted the curiosity to know what that ballad was ; so my worthy friend (what I daresay he never intended) has done me a mischief, and reduced me to the unfortunate alternative of leaving your curiosity ungratified, or else disgusting you with foolish verses, the unfinished production of a random moment, and never meant to have met your ear. I have heard or read somewhere of a gentleman who had some genius,

hand ; it bears the Dumfries Post-mark " June," but the year is invisible. It is backed in Glenriddell's hand.

* These two words, not in the original, have been inserted by former editors to help the author's meaning.

much eccentricity, and very considerable dexterity with his pencil. In the accidental groups of social life into which one is thrown, whenever this gentleman met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his soul, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely, he said, as a *nota bene*, to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, is my muse to me ; and the enclosed verses I do myself the honor to send you are a *memento* exactly of the same kind. It may be more owing to the fastidiousness of my caprice than the delicacy of my taste ; but I am so often tired, disgusted, and hurt with the insipidity, affectation, and pride of mankind, that when I meet with a person, "after my own heart," I positively feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration ; and I can no more desist rhyming on the impulse, than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air. A distich or two would be the consequence, though the object which hit my fancy were grey-bearded wrinkled age ; but where my theme is youth and beauty, a young lady whose personal charms, wit, and sentiment are equally striking and unaffected—by Heavens ! though I had lived three score years a married man, and three score years before I was a married man, my imagination would hallow the very idea : and I am truly sorry that the enclosed stanzas have done such poor justice to such a subject.—I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

The above closes the volume of the author's letters transcribed for Captain Riddell, and unfortunately bears no date. Dr. Currie had either considered it unworthy of publication, or felt that by printing another letter addressed to the same lady (that which we next present), he had given sufficient prominence to so minor a heroine of the poet. The ballad enclosed was evidently the lively jingling piece given at page

38, *supra*, each verse of which introduces an eccentric rhyme to correspond with "the charms of lovely Davies," celebrated in the closing line of every stanza. The other song, "Bonie wee thing, cannie wee thing," which this interesting young lady inspired, has become very popular, as well through its own merits, as from its good fortune to be united to one of the most charming of the Scottish melodies. The reader will find all that requires to be said about the story of Miss Deborah Davies in a note at page 39. The charming sentimental song just referred to was enclosed in the following carefully composed letter. The use which Carlyle made of the passage in inverted commas about "ascending the rock Independence," will here occur to the reader who is familiar with that author's famous review of Lockhart's *Life of Burns*.

(²) TO MISS DAVIES,

ENCLOSING A SONG INSPIRED BY HER CHARMS.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[Aug. 1791.]

It is impossible, Madam, that the generous warmth and angelic purity of your youthful mind can have any idea of that moral disease under which I unhappily must rank as the chief of sinners; I mean a torpidity of the moral powers, that may be called a lethargy of conscience. In vain Remorse rears her horrent crest, and rouses all her snakes: beneath the deadly fixed eye and leaden hand of Indolence, their wildest ire is charmed into the torpor of the bat, slumbering out the rigors of winter in the chink of a ruined wall. Nothing less, Madam, could have made me so long neglect your obliging commands. Indeed I had one apology—the bagatelle was not worth presenting. Besides, so strongly am I interested in Miss Davies's fate and welfare in the serious business of life, amid its chances and changes, that to make her the subject of a silly ballad, is downright mockery of

these ardent feelings; 'tis like an impertinent jest to a dying friend.

Gracious Heaven! why this disparity between our wishes and our powers? Why is the most generous wish to make others blest impotent and ineffectual as the idle breeze that crosses the pathless desert? In my walks of life I have met with a few people to whom how gladly would I have said—"Go, be happy! I know that your hearts have been wounded by the scorn of the proud, whom accident has placed above you—or worse still, in whose hands are, perhaps, placed many of the comforts of your life. But there! ascend that rock, Independence, and look justly down on their littleness of soul. Make the worthless tremble under your indignation, and the foolish sink before your contempt; and largely impart that happiness to others, which, I am certain, will give yourselves so much pleasure to bestow!"

Why, dear Madam, must I wake from this delightful reverie, and find it all a dream? Why, amid my generous enthusiasm, must I find myself poor and powerless, incapable of wiping one tear from the eye of pity, or of adding one comfort to the friend I love!—Out upon the world! say I, that its affairs are administered so ill. They talk of reform: good Heaven! what a reform would I make among the sons, and even the daughters of men! Down immediately should go fools from the high places where misbegotten chance has perked them up, and through life should they skulk, ever haunted by their native insignificance, as the body marches accompanied by its shadow. As for a much more formidable class, the knaves, I am at a loss what to do with them: had I a world, there should not be a knave in it, . . .
 . . . But the hand that could give, I would liberally fill: and I would pour delight on the heart that could kindly forgive, and generously love.

Still the inequalities of life are, among men, comparatively tolerable ; but there is a delicacy, a tenderness, accompanying every view in which we can place lovely Woman, that are grated and shocked at the rude, capricious distinctions of Fortune. Woman is the blood-royal of life : let there be slight degrees of precedency among them—but let them be ALL sacred. Whether this last sentiment be right or wrong, I am not accountable : it is an original component feature of my mind. . . . R. B.

(¹) TO MR. THOMAS SLOAN.*

CARE OF WM. KENNEDY, ESQ., MANCHESTER.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MY DEAR SLOAN,—Suspense is worse than disappointment ; for that reason I hurry to tell you that I just now learn that Mr. Ballantine does not choose to interfere more in the business. I am truly sorry for it, but cannot help it.

You blame me for not writing you sooner ; but you will please to recollect that you omitted one little necessary piece of information—your address.

However, you know equally well my hurried life, indolent temper, and strength of attachment. It must be a longer period than the longest life “in the world’s hale and undegenerate days” that will make me forget so dear a friend as Mr. Sloan. I am prodigal enough at times, but I will not part with such a treasure as that.

I can easily enter into the *embarras* of your present

* The MS. of this letter is now preserved within the poet’s Monument at Edinburgh. Mr. Sloan was a native of Wanlockhead, with whom Burns formed an acquaintance during his frequent journeys in 1788 and 1789, between Ellisland and Ayrshire.

situation. You know my favorite quotation from Young—

“——— on reason build resolve—
That column of true majesty in man!”

and that other favorite one from Thomson's *Alfred*—

“What proves the hero truly great,
Is never, never to despair.”

Or, shall I quote you an author of your acquaintance?

“For whether doing, SUFFERING, or FORBEARING
You may do miracles by—PERSEVERING.”

I have nothing new to tell you. The few friends we have are going on in the old way. I sold my crop on this day se'ennight past, and sold it very well. A guinea an acre, on an average, above value. But such a scene of drunkenness was hardly ever seen in this country. After the roup was over, about thirty people engaged in a battle, every man for his own hand, and fought it out for three hours. Nor was the scene much better in the house. No fighting indeed, but folks lying drunk on the floor, and decanting until both my dogs got so drunk by attending them, that they could not stand. You will easily guess how I enjoyed the scene; as I was no farther over than you used to see me.

Mrs. B. and family have been in Ayrshire these many weeks.

Farewell! and God bless you, my dear friend!

ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, 1st September, 1791.

(2) TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[Sep. 1791.]

MY LORD,—Language sinks under the ardor of my feelings when I would thank your Lordship for the honor you have done me in inviting me to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson. In my first enthusiasm, in reading the card you did me the honor to write me, I overlooked every obstacle, and determined to go; but I fear it will not be in my power. A week or two's absence, in the very middle of my harvest, is what I much doubt I dare not venture on.

Your Lordship hints at an ode for the occasion: but who would write after Collins? I read over his verses to the memory of Thomson, and despaired. I got indeed to the length of three or four stanzas, in the way of address to the shade of the bard, on crowning his bust. I shall trouble your Lordship with the subjoined copy of them, which, I am afraid, will be but too convincing a proof how unequal I am to the task. However, it affords me an opportunity of approaching your Lordship, and declaring how sincerely and gratefully I have the honor to be, &c. R. B.

The above letter enclosed our poet's "Address to the shade of Thomson," given at page 68, *supra*. The Earl had invited Burns "to make one at the coronation of the bust of Thomson, on Ednam Hill, on the 22d of September, for which occasion perhaps his muse may inspire a suitable Ode."

In a reply, dated 16th September, the Earl informs Burns that his "Address" had been well received by the public, and suggests "Harvest Home" as a subject for his future musings; but recommends him to write in English, rather than in a "dialect which admits of no elegance or dignity of expression." Such a subject, he adds, "would furnish you with an amiable opportunity of perpetuating the names of Glencairn, Miller, and your other eminent benefactors; which,

from what I know of your spirit and have seen of your poems and letters, will not deviate from the chastity of praise that it is so uniformly united to true taste and genius."

(ⁱ) TO JAMES GRACIE, ESQ., BANKER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

GLOBE INN, 8 o'clock p.m. [1791.]

SIR,—I have yours anent Crombie's bill.* Your forbearance has been very great. I did it to accommodate the thoughtless fellow. He asks till Wednesday week. If he fail, I pay it myself. In the meantime, if horning and caption be absolutely necessary, grip him by the neck, and welcome. Yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

A LETTER FOR MR. CLARKE TO SEND TO
MR. WILLIAMSON,†

FACTOTUM AND FAVORITE TO THE EARL OF
HOPETOUN.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

[ELLISLAND, *Sep.* 1791.]

SIR,—Most sincerely do I regret that concurrence of accident, prejudice, and mistake, which, most unfortunately for me, has subjected me, as master of Moffat Grammar School, to the displeasure of the Earl of Hopetoun, and those in whom he places confidence. Protestations of my innocence will, from me, be thought words of course. But I hope, and I think I

* This defaulter was a mason at Dalswinton, who had been employed in building the poet's new house at Ellisland, and had been paid for his work.

† Died at Edinburgh, 12th July 1805, Alexander Williamson of Balgray, Esq., many years factor to the Earl of Hopetoun.—*Scots Mag.*

have some well-grounded reasons for that hope, that the gentlemen in whose hands I immediately am, the Right Hon. Patrons of the School, will find the charge against me groundless, and my claims just : and will not allow me to fall a sacrifice to the insidious designs of some, and the well-meant, though misinformed zeal of others. However, as disputes and litigations must be of great hurt, both to the School and me, I most ardently wish that it would suggest itself to Mr. Williamson's good sense and wish for the welfare of the country, the propriety of dropping all disputes, and allowing me peaceable admission to my school and the exercise of my function. This, Sir, I am persuaded, will be serving all parties ; and will lay *me* under particular and lasting obligations to your goodness. I propose opening my School to-morrow ; and the quiet possession of my school-house is what I have to request of you—a request which, if refused, I must be under the very disagreeable necessity of asking in the way pointed out by the laws of the country. Whatever you, Sir, may think of other parts of my conduct, you will at least grant the propriety of a man's straining every nerve in a contest, where not only Ruin but Infamy must attend his defeat. I am,
&c. (Signed) JAMES CLARKE.*

THE AFTON LODGE MANUSCRIPTS.

(McKEE, 1869.)

IN the latter portion of 1791 the beautiful set of manuscripts presented by Burns to Mrs. Stewart of Afton (enumerated at page 66, *supra*), seem to have been forwarded with the following note prefixed to them :—

Many verses, on which an author would by no

* This subject is resumed under dates Jan. and Feb. 1792. Burns, under his transcript of the present letter in the Glenriddell collection, writes these words, "Bravo ! Clarke. In spite of Hopetoun and his myrmidons, thou camest off victorious."

means rest his reputation in print, may yet amuse an idle moment in manuscript; and many Poems, from the locality of the subject, may be uninteresting, or unintelligible to those who are strangers to that locality. Most of, if not all, the following Poems are in one or other of those predicaments, and the author begs whoever into whose hands they may fall, that they will do him the justice not to publish what he himself thought proper to suppress. R. B.

[ELLISLAND, *Oct.* 1791.]

(¹) TO MR. CORBET, SUPERVISOR-GENERAL
OF EXCISE.*

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

[*Oct.* 1791.]

SIR,—I have in my time taken up the pen on several ticklish subjects, but none that ever cost me half so much as the language of supplication. To lay open one's wants and woes to the mercy of another's benevolence, is a business so prostituted by the worthless and unfeeling, that a man of principle and delicacy shrinks from it as from contamination.

Mr. Findlater tells me that you wish to know from myself what are my views in desiring to exchange my excise division. With the wish natural to man of bettering his present situation, I have turned my thoughts towards the practicability of getting into a port division. As I know that the general superiors are omnipotent in these matters, my honored friend Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop offered me to interest you in my behalf.

She told me that she was well acquainted with Mrs. Corbet's goodness, and that, on the score of former

* The name of this gentleman is first mentioned in the poet's letter to Mrs. Dunlop, of Nov. 1790. The present letter is taken from the Glenriddell MS. Book at Liverpool.

intimacy, she thought she could promise some influence with her, and added, with her usual sagacity and knowledge of human nature, that the surest road to the good offices of a man was through the mediation of the woman he loved. On this footing, Sir, I venture my application, else not even the known generosity of your character would have emboldened me to address you thus.—I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

(¹) TO COL. FULLARTON OF FULLARTON.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL'S ED., 1835.)

SIR,—I have just this minute got the frank, and next minute must send it to post, else I purposed to have sent you two or three other bagatelles that might have amused a vacant hour about as well as “Six excellent new songs” or “The Aberdeen Prognostications for the year to come.” I shall probably trouble you soon with another packet. About the “gloomy month of November, when the people of England hang and drown themselves,” any thing generally is better than one’s own thoughts.

Fond as I may be of my own productions, it is not for their sake that I am so anxious to send you them. I am ambitious, covetously ambitious of being known to a gentleman whom I am proud to call my Countryman; a gentleman who was a Foreign Ambassador as soon as he was a man, and a Leader of Armies as soon as he was a soldier, and that with an *éclat* unknown to the usual minions of a Court—men who, with all the adventitious advantages of Princely connexions and Princely Fortune, must yet, like the caterpillar, labor a whole lifetime before they reach the wished-for height, there to roost a stupid chrysalis, and doze out the remaining glimmering existence of old age.

If the gentleman who accompanied you when you did me the honor of calling on me, is with you, I beg to be respectfully remembered to him.—I have the honor to be, Sir, your highly obliged, and most devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

ELLISLAND, *Oct. 3, 1791.*

The original MS. of the foregoing beautiful letter is now in the possession of John Adam, Esq., Greenock. Colonel Fullarton is referred to in "The Vision," as "Brydone's brave Ward." In 1793, he published a "View of Agriculture in Ayrshire," in which he thus compliments Burns, not as a poet, but as a farmer or cattle-owner:—"In order to prevent the danger arising from horned cattle in studs and straw-yards, the best mode is to cut out the budding knob, or root of the horn, while the calf is very young. This was suggested to me by Mr. Robert Burns, whose general talents are no less conspicuous than the poetic powers which have done so much honor to the county in which he was born."

About this period, when our bard had determined on abandoning for ever a farmer's life, his attention was mainly directed to attain some increase in his Excise emoluments by changing his present district for one at a sea-port. A year before this he had, through the favor of Collector Mitchell, been appointed to "a vacant foot-walk in Dumfries;" but still he had not attained the position of a "port-officer." The letter addressed to Mr. Corbet, above given, explains his views on this matter, and his never-failing patron Mr. Graham is again addressed both in verse and prose, to remind him of "Nature's poor, fenceless, naked child, the Bard."

(⁸) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

ENCLOSING THE SECOND POETICAL EPISTLE.*

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

ELLISLAND, *Oct. 5, 1791.*

I OUGHT to have written you long ago; but a mere letter of thanks must to you be an insipid business. I

* Commencing "Late crippled of an arm," &c., page 79, *supra*.

wish to send you something that will give you at least as much amusement as "The Aberdeen New Prognosticator," or "Six Excellent New Songs." Along with two other pieces, I enclose you a sheetful of groans, wrung from me in my elbow-chair, with one unlucky leg on a stool before me. I will make no apology for addressing it to you; I have no longer a choice of patrons; the truly noble Glencairn is no more! I intend soon to do myself the honor of writing Mrs. Graham, and sending her some other lesser pieces of late date. My muse will sooner be in mischief than be idle; so I keep her at work.

I thought to have mentioned some Excise ideas that your late goodness has put in my head; but it is so like the sorning impudence of a sturdy beggar, that I cannot do it. It was something in the way of an officiating job. With the most ardent wish that you may be rewarded by *Him* who can do it, for your generous patronage to a man who, though feelingly sensible of it, is quite unable to repay it.—I have the honor to be, &c.

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹¹) TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

ELLISLAND, Oct. 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I was never more unfit for writing. A poor devil, nailed to an elbow-chair, writing in anguish with a bruised leg laid on a stool before him, is in a fine situation truly for saying bright things.

I may perhaps see you about Martinmas. I have sold to my landlord the lease of my farm, and as I roup off everything then, I have a mind to take a week's excursion to see old acquaintance. At all

events, you may reckon on [payment of] your account about that time. So much for business. I do not know if I ever informed you that I am now ranked on the list as a supervisor, and I have pretty good reason to believe that I shall soon be called out to employment. The appointment is worth from one to two hundred a year, according to the place of the country in which one is settled. I have not been so lucky in my farming. Mr. Miller's kindness has been just such another as Creech's was—but this for your private ear :

“His meddling vanity, a busy fiend,
Still making work his selfish craft must mend.”

By the way I have taken a damned vengeance of Creech. He wrote me a fine, fair letter, telling me that he was going to print a third edition ; and as he had a brother's care of my fame, he wished to add every new thing I have written since, and I should be amply rewarded with—a copy or two to present to my friends ! He has sent me a copy of the last edition to correct, &c., but I have as yet taken no notice of it ; and I hear he has published without me.* You know, and all my friends know, that I do not value money ; but I owed the gentleman a debt, which I am happy to have it in my power to repay.

Farewell, and prosperity attend all your undertakings ! I shall try, if my unlucky limb would give me a little ease, to write you a letter a little better worth reading. Put the enclosed to post. R. B.

* Creech issued a reprint of the one volume Edinburgh edition in July 1790. In September 1791 Messrs. Cadell and Davies of London, recommended Mr. Creech to print an edition of 1000 copies in 2 vols. crown 8vo. We shall hereafter see that not till April 1792 did Burns agree to co-operate with Creech in that matter, and undertake to supply him with additional poems to the extent of 50 pages or so.

FROM MARTINMAS 1791 TO 21ST JULY 1796.

MRS. Burns, in her memoranda noted down by Mr. M'Diarmid, says—"We did not come empty-handed to Dumfries. The Ellisland sale was a very good one, and was well attended. A cow in her first calf brought eighteen guineas, and the purchaser never rued his bargain. Two other cows brought good prices. They had been presented by Mrs. Dunlop of Dunlop. Burns neither failed as a farmer, nor in any other capacity. At Martinmas 1791, he repaired to Dumfries, and took up his abode in Bank Street. His salary as an Exciseman never exceeded £70, and that he only got as Port-officer."

The house which Burns occupied comprised three small apartments of a second floor on the north side of Bank Street, then called "the Wee Vennel," and is thus described by Chambers:—"The small central room, about the size of a bed-closet, is the only place in which he may seclude himself for study. On the ground floor immediately underneath, his friend John Syme has his office for the distribution of stamps. Overhead (in the third floor) is an honest blacksmith, called John Haugh, whom Burns treats on a familiar footing as a neighbor. On the opposite side of the street is the poet's landlord, Captain Hamilton, a gentleman of fortune and worth, who admires Burns, and often asks him to a family Sunday dinner."

It is a curious circumstance—perhaps an ominous one, that the earliest letter of Burns we have to record after his removal to Dumfries is a most melancholy one. Dr. Currie printed it without date, placing it among the Ellisland letters in the autumn of 1791; but the postscript decidedly indicates a change of locality in the writer's address—"I have one or two good fellows *here*, whom you would be glad to know." Ainslie had been a guest at Ellisland, and introduced to all the "good fellows" there.

(¹⁴) TO ROBERT AINSLIE, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, *Nov.* 1791.

MY DEAR AINSLIE,—Can you minister to a mind diseased? Can you, amid the horrors of penitence, regret, remorse, headache, nausea, and all the rest of

the hounds of hell that beset a poor wretch who has been guilty of the sin of drunkenness—can you speak peace to a troubled soul?

Misérable perdu that I am ! I have tried everything that used to amuse me, but in vain : here must I sit, a monument of the vengeance laid up in store for the wicked, slowly counting every click of the clock as it slowly—slowly, numbers over these lazy scoundrels of hours who (d—n them !) are ranked up before me, every one at his neighbor's backside, and every one with a burden of anguish on his back, to pour on my devoted head—and there is none to pity me. My wife scolds me ! my business torments me, and my sins come staring me in the face, every one telling a more bitter tale than his fellow. When I tell you, even

* * * * has lost its power to please, you will guess something of my hell within, and all around me. I began “*Elibanks and Elibraes*,” but the stanzas fell unenjoyed and unfinished from my listless tongue ; at last I luckily thought of reading over an old letter of yours that lay by me in my bookcase, and I felt something, for the first time since I opened my eyes, of pleasurable existence.—Well—I begin to breathe a little since I began to write you. How are you, and what are you doing ? How goes law ? Apropos, for connection's sake do not address me as “*Supervisor*,” for that is an honor I cannot pretend to—I am on the list, as we call it, for a Supervisorship, and will be called out by and by to act as one ; but at present, I am a simple Gauger, tho' t'other day I got an appointment to an excise division of £25 *per ann.* better than the rest. My present income, down money, is £70 *per ann.*

* * * * *

I have one or two good fellows here whom you would be glad to know.

* * * * *

R. B.

(32) TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, 17th December 1791.*]

MANY thanks to you, Madam, for your good news respecting the little floweret and the mother-plant. I hope my poetic prayers have been heard, and will be answered up to the warmest sincerity of their fullest extent; and then Mrs. Henri will find her little darling the representative of his late parent, in everything but his abridged existence.

I have just finished the following song which, to a lady the descendant of Wallace, and many heroes of his truly illustrious line—and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology.

Scene—A field of battle—time of the day, evening; the wounded and dying of the victorious army are supposed to join in the following

SONG OF DEATH.

Farewell thou fair day, thou green earth, and ye skies,
Now gay with the bright setting sun;
Farewell loves and friendships, ye dear, tender ties—
Our race of existence is run! &c.—See page 82, *supra*.

The circumstance that gave rise to the foregoing verses was—looking over with a musical friend M'Donald's collection of Highland airs, I was struck with one, an Isle of Sky tune, entitled *Oran an Aoig*, or "The Song of Death," to the measure of which I have adapted my stanzas. I have of late composed two or three other little pieces, which, ere yon full-

*Dr. Currie dated this letter from "Ellisland," which must be a mistake if his date be correct. The immediately preceding letter to Mrs. Dunlop, dated 11th April 1791, speaks of young Henri having the small-pox, and the "good news" here spoken of probably refer to the mother and child's safe arrival in France, at the invitation of the deceased Mr. Henri's relatives.

orbed moon, whose broad impudent face now stares at Mother Earth all night, shall have shrunk into a modest crescent, just peeping forth at dewy dawn, I shall find an hour to transcribe for you. *A Dieu je vous commende.*
ROBT. BURNS.

A.D. 1792.

(¹) TO MR. JAMES CLARKE, SCHOOLMASTER,
MOFFAT.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, 10th January 1792.

I RECEIVED yours this moment, my dear Sir. I sup with Captain Riddell in town to-night, else I had gone to Carse directly. *Courage, mon ami!* The day may, after all, be yours: but at any rate, there is other air to breathe than that of Moffat, pestiferously tainted as it is with the breath of that arch-rascal J——. There are two quotations from two poets which, in situations such as yours, were congenial to my soul. Thomson says:—

“What proves the hero truly great
Is never, never to despair.”

And Dr. Young:—

“On Reason build Resolve,
That column of true Majesty in man.”

To-morrow you shall know the result of my consultation with Captain Riddell. Yours, R. B.

Captain Riddell, of Carse and Glenriddell, had a younger brother, Mr. Walter Riddell, who possessed an estate in the Island of Antigua, and had recently returned to his native country to enjoy, in a more temperate climate and in more agreeable society, the proceeds of his possessions. His wife, a

gay young Creole, under twenty, although already a mother, was blessed with personal beauty, agreeable manners and many accomplishments, to which were superadded a taste for natural history and polite literature. It appears that Burns was introduced to her on taking up his residence in Dumfries, and as she delighted in the society of men of talent and spirit he soon became a frequent visitor at Woodley Park, the residence of her husband, situated about four miles south from the town. The name thus given to their newly acquired residence, formerly called "Goldielea," was bestowed in honor of the lady's family name, her father being Mr. Woodley, Governor and Commander-in-Chief of St. Kitts, and the Leeward Islands.

In course of her voyage to this country, Mrs. Riddell had passed some time at the Leeward Isles, and at Madeira, where she made scientific observations and notes of their natural history; these notes were now arranged in form of a volume which she resolved on publishing.* Having learned that Mr. William Smellie, of Edinburgh, author of a work on natural history, was the printer of Burns's Edinburgh edition, she applied to the poet to give her a letter of introduction to the scientific printer, which was promptly acceded to, in the following amusing fashion.

(¹) TO MR. WILLIAM SMELLIE, PRINTER,
EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 22d January 1792.

I SIT down, my dear Sir, to introduce a young lady to you, and a lady in the first ranks of fashion too. What a task! to you—who care no more for the herd of animals called young ladies, than you do for the herd of animals called young gentlemen. To you—who despise and detest the groupings and combinations of fashion, as an idiot painter that seems indus-

* Mrs. Riddell's work is thus announced in the *Scots Magazine* of November, 1792, as just published:—"Voyages to Madeira and Leeward Caribbee Islands; with Sketches of the Natural History of these Islands. By MARIA R——, Cadell, London; Hill, Edinburgh."

trious to place staring fools and unprincipled knaves in the foreground of his picture, while men of sense and honesty are too often thrown in the dimmest shades. Mrs. Riddell, who will take this letter to town with her and send it to you, is a character that, even in your own way, as a naturalist and a philosopher, would be an acquisition to your acquaintance. The lady too is a votary of the muses; and as I think myself somewhat of a judge of my own trade, I assure you that her verses, always correct, and often elegant, are much beyond the common run of the *lady poetesses* of the day. She is a great admirer of your book, and hearing me say that I was acquainted with you, she begged to be known to you, as she is just going to pay her first visit to our Caledonian capital. I told her that her best way was, to desire her near relation, and your intimate friend, Craighdarroch, to have you at his house while she was there; and lest you might think of a lively West Indian girl of eighteen, as girls of eighteen too often deserve to be thought of, I should take care to remove that prejudice. To be impartial, however, in appreciating the lady's merits, she has one unlucky failing! a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it; and a failing that you will as easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself—where she dislikes or despises, she is apt to make no more a secret of it, than where she esteems and respects.

I will not present you with the unmeaning “compliments of the season,” but I will send you my warmest wishes and most ardent prayers that *Fortune* may never throw your *subsistence* to the mercy of a *Knave*, or set your *character* on the judgment of a *Fool*; but that, upright and erect, you may walk to an honest grave, where men of letters shall say:—“Here lies a man who did honor to science,” and

men of worth shall say :—"Here lies a man who did honor to human nature."

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹²) TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, 5th Feb., 1792.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I send you by the bearer, Mr. Clarke, a particular friend of mine, six pounds and a shilling, which you will dispose of as follows :—£5, 10s. per acct., I owe to Mr. Robt. Burn, architect, for erecting the stone over poor Ferguson. He was two years in erecting it after I commissioned him for it, and I have been two years in paying him after he sent his account, so he and I are quits. He had the hardness to ask me interest on the sum ; but, considering that the money was due by one Poet for putting a tombstone over another, he may, with grateful surprise, thank Heaven that ever he saw a farthing of it.

With the remainder of the money, pay yourself for the "Office of a Messenger" that I bought of you ; and send me by Mr. Clarke a note of its price. Send me, likewise, the fifth volume of the "Observer," by Mr. Clarke ; and if any money remain, let it stand to account.

My best compliments to Mrs. Hill. I sent you a *Maukin* by last week's Fly which I hope you received. Yours most sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

The original MS. of the above letter is now in possession of Thomas Arnott, Esq., Laurel Bank, Partick, Glasgow, and the architect's account referred to is preserved in the poet's monument at Edinburgh. The following is a literal transcript :—

Mr. Robert Burns,

To J. & R. Burn.

June 23, 1789.

54 Feet polished Craigleith Stone for a Headstone for Robert Ferguson, at 1s.,	£2 14 0
10 Feet 8 inches dble. Base Moulding, at 1s. 6d.,	0 16 0
4 Large Iron Cramps,	0 2 10
2 Stones to set the base on, at 1s.,	0 2 0
320 Letters on do., at 8s.,	1 5 8
Head, and setting up ditto,	0 5 0
Gravedigger's dues,	0 5 0

In the letter which enclosed the account to the poet in 1789, Mr. Robert Burn,* apologises for the delay that had taken place in erecting the stone, and facetiously adds:—"I shall be happy to receive orders of a like nature for as many more of your friends that have gone hence as you please."

(⁹) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., WRITER,
EDINBURGH.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)†

MY DEAR CUNNINGHAM :—To-morrow, or some day soon, I will write you as entertaining a letter as I can; in the meantime take a scrawl of very serious business. You remember Mr. Clarke, Master of the Grammar School at Moffat, whom I formerly recommended to your good offices: the crisis of his fate is just at hand.‡ Mr. M'Murdo of Drumlanrig, Ferguson of Craigdarroch, and Riddell of Glenriddell, gentlemen who know Clarke personally and intimately, have strained and are straining every nerve to serve him, but alas! poor Clarke's foes are mighty! Lord Hope-toun, spurred on by those infernal creatures that always go between a great Man and his inferiors, has sworn his destruction; irritated as he justly is that any Plebeian, and the son of a Plebeian, should dare to oppose *existence*—a trifling affair, against his Lordship's high

* "Died at Edinburgh, June 5, 1815, Mr. Robert Burn, architect."—*Scots Magazine*.

† From the poet's holograph in the possession of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq., Edinburgh.

‡ See the poet's letters to Clarke at pp. 288 and 293 of present volume.

and mighty will. What I know, and *you* know that I would do for a friend of yours, I ask of you for a friend—a much esteemed friend of mine. Get the Principal's interest in his favor.* Be not denied! To interpose between lordly cruelty and helpless merit is a task worthy of you to ask, and him to execute. In the meantime, if you meet with Craigdarroch, or chance to wait on him (by the bye, I wish you would mention this very business), he will inform you of the great merits of one party, and the demerits of the other.

You shall hear from me soon. God bless you!

ROBT. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, 5th Feb. 1792.

(²) TO MR. JAMES CLARKE, SCHOOLMASTER,
MOFFAT.

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

DUMFRIES, 17th Feb., 1792.

MY DEAR SIR,—If this finds you at Moffat, or as soon as it finds you at Moffat, you must without delay wait on Mr. Riddell, as he has been very kindly thinking of you in an affair that has occurred of a clerk's place in Manchester, which, if your hopes are desperate in your present business, he proposes procuring for you. I know your gratitude for past, as well as hopes of future, favors will induce you to pay every attention to Glenriddell's wishes; as he is almost the only, and undoubtedly the best friend that your unlucky fate has left you.

Apropos, I just now hear that you have beat your foes, *every tail hollow*. Huzza! *Io triumphe!* † Mr.

* Principal Robertson, the historian, was Cunningham's uncle.

† Notwithstanding the "triumph," it is certain that Clarke still continued to require, and did obtain, assistance from our poet, and he soon relinquished his situation at Moffat for a similar one in Forfar. The reader will hear of him again in 1796.

Riddell, who is at my elbow, says that if it is so, he begs that you will wait on him directly, and I know you are too good a man not to pay your respects to your saviour. Yours,
R. B.

Down to the present date, the reader has seen little or nothing of any interest which Burns took in the progress of the French Revolution. Just about the time when he was corresponding with Helen Maria Williams of London, and criticising her poem on Slavery, in July 1789, the Bastille was destroyed and the Princes of the Blood and chief Noblesse were fain to escape from France. In October following, poor Louis XVI. was brought to Paris, and forced to accept the "Declaration of the Rights of Man." This was immediately followed by a Decree of the National Assembly re-constructing France into Departments; and Monastic Institutions and Titles of Nobility were suppressed. The King, who was kept a close prisoner, failed in an attempt to escape, in June 1791, and was forced formally to accept the new Constitution. Such was the position of matters at the date we have now reached. A minute examination of the daily chronicles of that period indicates little or no apprehension in Britain, that as a nation it was soon to become the enemy of the French. Certainly, from the first outbreak, Edmund Burke threw out what he deemed patriotic warnings of a bloody future; but, as yet, little suspicion of evil consequences was exhibited by the British public.* In January 1792, George III. opened parliament with congratulations on the peace and internal prosperity of the country; and Burns was only one of the many thousands at home who felt and expressed sympathy with the "French reformers."

At page 113, *supra*, we have, in connexion with the song, "The deil's awa wi' th' Exciseman," introduced Lockhart's account of the capture of a smuggling craft in February 1792 by Burns and his party, of the sale of the stores and arms of the captured vessel, and of the purchase by the poet of four carronades, said to have been afterwards forwarded by him as a present to the French National Assembly. That story may be either a fact or an invention; but it does not justify Mr. Lockhart's condemnation of the poet's act of sympathy with

* "The Revolution in France, which patriots behold with admiration, and angels with applause, is vilified and traduced by Burke."—Letter of "Philothodosius" in the *Scots Magazine*, June 1790.

what he reckoned the cause of human freedom. He was doing no more than was being done around him on every side. In the latter part of January 1792, a subscription was opened in Glasgow "to aid the French in carrying on the war against the emigrant princes, or any foreign power by whom they may be attacked." The newspaper paragraph in which the announcement appeared, adds that "a sum of £1200 has already been subscribed." Burns, it is true, was a servant of the government at the time he is alleged to have been guilty of "an absurd and presumptuous breach of decorum" in sending the four pieces of small ordnance to France; but he did the act *openly*, if it was done at all, and nowhere does it appear that any person entitled to take notice of and challenge his conduct, was of opinion that he committed a fault.

TO J. LEVEN, ESQ.,

GEN. SUPERVISOR, EXCISE OFFICE, EDINBURGH.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

[MARCH, 1792.]

SIR,—I have sealed and secured Lawson's Tea, but no permit has yet appeared, nor can it appear before Tuesday at the nearest; so there is the greater chance of the condemnation. I shrewdly suspect the Newcastle House, Rankine and Sons, is the firm; they will think that the goods being regularly delivered to a Carrier, with proper permit, will exonerate them as to farther responsibility; and Lawson, on his part, is determined not to have anything to do with it; so our process may be the easier managed.

The moment that the permits arrive, as I am pretty certain they will, I shall inform you; but, in the meantime, when the three remaining boxes arrive, as they cannot, *in quality*, correspond with the permit,

* From Alexander Laing, Esq., Newburgh on Tay, Mr. Douglas obtained a copy of this letter from the poet's holograph, now in possession of the widow of James Painter, Esq., St. John's Wood, London, who was a nephew of the gentleman addressed.

criminal indolence should lead me an uneasy life of reproach. I ought long ago to have written you on this very business.*

Now, to try a language of which I am not half master, I shall assume as well as I can, the man of business. I suppose, at a gross guess, that I could add of new materials to your two volumes, about fifty pages. I would also correct and retrench a good deal. These said fifty pages you know are as much mine as the thumb-stall I have just now drawn on my finger which I unfortunately gashed in mending my pen. A few books which I very much want are all the recompence I crave, together with as many copies of this new edition of my own works as Friendship or Gratitude shall prompt me to present. There are three men whom you know, and whose friendly patronage I think I can trouble so far—Messrs. M'Kenzie, D. Stewart, and F. Tytler; to any of these I shall submit my MSS. for their strictures; and also let *them* say on my informing them—I mean any of them—what *Authors* I want, to what value of them I am entitled. If he adjudge me a “Tom Thumb” I am content. The “Man of Feeling,” and Professor Stewart are, I hear, busy with works of their own, for which reason I shall prefer Tytler. So soon as I hear from you, I shall write Mr. Tytler, and in a fortnight more I shall put my MSS. in his hands.

If the thing were possible that I could receive the proof-sheets by our Dumfries Fly, which runs three times a week, I would earnestly wish to correct them myself.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your very humble servt.,

ROBT. BURNS.†

* See page 284, *supra*.

† For access to the original MS. of this important letter, we are indebted to the representatives of Mr. Creech.

(⁶) TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER,
LAWNMARKET, EDINBURGH.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

DUMFRIES, *May 1792.*

DR. SIR,—This will be presented to you by one of your subscribers, and a gentleman to whose musical talents you are much indebted for getting your Scotch tunes. Let him know your progress, and how you come on with the work. Inclosed is one song out of many I have yet to send you ; and likewise I inclose you another, and I think, a better set of Craigieburnwood, which you will give to Mr. Clarke to compare with the former set, as I am extremely anxious to have that song right,—I am, dr. Sir, yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹) TO MR. STEPHEN CLARKE, ORGANIST,
EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, *16th July 1792.*

MR. BURNS begs leave to present his most respectful compliments to Mr. Clarke. Mr. B. some time ago did himself the honor of writing Mr. C. respecting coming out to the country, to give a little musical instruction in a highly respectable family, where Mr. C. may have his own terms, and may be as happy as indolence, the Devil, and the gout will permit him. Mr. B. knows well how Mr. C. is engaged with another family ; but cannot Mr. C. find two or three weeks to spare to each of them ? Mr. B. is deeply impressed

* From the original MS. in the British Museum, London.

with, and awfully conscious of, the high importance of Mr. C.'s time, whether in the winged moments of symphonious exhibition at the keys of harmony, while listening Seraphs cease from their own less delightful strains; or in the drowsy hours of slumb'rous repose, in the arms of his dearly beloved elbow-chair, where the frowsy, but potent Power of indolence, circumfuses her vapors round, and sheds her dews on, the head of her darling Son.

But half a line conveying half a meaning from Mr. C. would make Mr. B. the very happiest of mortals.

PREFACE TO VOL. IV. OF JOHNSON'S MUSEUM.

WHEN the Editor published the third volume of this work, he had reason to conclude that one volume more would finish the Publication. Still, however, he has a considerable number of Scots airs and Songs more than his plan allowed him to include in this fourth volume. These, though in all probability they will not amount to what he has hitherto published as one volume, he shall yet give to the world; that the Scots Musical Museum may be a Collection of every Scots song extant.

To those who object that this Publication contains pieces of inferior, or little, value, the Editor answers by referring to his plan. All our songs cannot have equal merit. Besides, as the world has not agreed on any unerring balance, any undisputed standard, in matters of taste, what to one person yields no manner of pleasure, may to another be a high enjoyment.

EDIN., *August* 13, 1792.*

* It may be of some interest here to enumerate a few of the more popular

(³) TO ROBERT RIDDELL, ESQ., OF GLEN-
RIDDELL.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

[*Dumfries*, 1792.]

MY DEAR SIR,—On rummaging over some old papers I lighted on a manuscript of my early years, in which I had determined to write myself out; as I was placed by fortune among a class of men to whom my ideas would have been nonsense. I had meant that the book should have lain by me, in the fond hope that, some time or other, even after I was no more, my thoughts would fall into the hands of somebody capable of appreciating their value. It sets off thus :—

“OBSERVATIONS, HINTS, SONGS, SCRAPS OF POETRY, &c.,
By R. B.

(See Common-place Book, Vol. V.)

The foregoing is extracted from the MS. book of Letters collected by the author for his friend, Captain Riddell, and forms the Introduction to an Abridgement of his first Common-place Book. In that abridged copy, the poet made a few verbal alterations in course of transcribing, but these are unimportant; for instance, the substitution of the expression “courted,” for *coveted*, and “language of the Hebrew bard,” for *language of Scripture*. He closes the selections in these

songs of Burns that made their first appearance in the volume above referred to :—

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever.
An' O for ane and twenty Tam.
Bonie wee thing, cannie wee thing.
The Song of Death.
Flow gently sweet Afton.
The Whistle of worth.
The Posie.
The gallant Weaver.

O meikle thinks my love o' my beauty.
Craigieburn Wood.
She's fair and fause.
Turn again, thou fair Eliza.
My bonie Bell.
The deil's awa wi' the Exciseman.
Ye banks and braes o' bonie Doon.
Willie Wastle dwelt on Tweed.

What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?

words:—"This is all that, and perhaps more than, is worth quoting in my MSS."

We come now to a letter which is very difficult to place in its proper chronological order. It is impossible to say at what date our author was prevailed on by his kind friend Mr. M'Murdo to undergo an introduction to, and personal interview with, the Duke of Queensberry, the bare mention of whose name had, for a series of years, been sufficient to rouse him into indignation. Certain it is, however, that such a personal meeting between the poet and the Whig Peer did take place, as the following letter addressed to the Duke shortly thereafter, informs us. It is copied into the Glenriddell collection of the poet's letters, without any date attached or suggested; and we present it under the latest probable date, as the bard was not likely to send, in manuscript, his poem of the Whistle to any one after it was published to the world. This Peer would be about 66 years old in 1792. He survived till 23rd December 1810.

(¹) TO THE DUKE OF QUEENSBERRY,

ENCLOSING THE BALLAD OF "THE WHISTLE."

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

MY LORD DUKE,—Will your Grace pardon this approach in a poor Poet, who perhaps intrudes on your converse with Princes, to present you—all he has to offer—his best ballad, and to beg of you—all he has to ask—your gracious acceptance of it? Whatever might be my opinion of the merits of the poem, I would not have dared to take the liberty of presenting it thus, but for your Grace's acquaintance with the *Dramatis Personæ* of the piece.*

* The identical Whistle won by Craigdarroch at the celebrated bacchanalian contest on 16th October 1789, was produced at the anniversary dinner of the Edinburgh Burns Club, 1867, by its vice-president, Mr. Maitland of Eccles, the

When I first thought of sending my poem to your Grace, I had some misgivings of heart about it—something within me seemed to say :—"A nobleman of the first rank and the first taste, and who has lived in the first Court of Europe, what will he care for either you or your ballad? Depend upon it that he will look on this business as some one or other of the many modifications of that servility of soul with which authors, and particularly you poets, have ever approached the Great."

No! said I to myself, I am conscious of the purity of my motives; and as I never crouch to any man but the man I have wronged, nor even him unless he forgives me, I will approach his Grace with tolerable upright confidence, that were I and my ballad poorer stuff than we are, the Duke of Queensberry's polite affability would make me welcome, as my sole motive is to show how sincerely I have the honor to be,

My Lord Duke,

Your Grace's most obedient, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

This was written shortly after I had the honor of being introduced to the Duke, at which introduction I spent the evening with him, when he treated me with the most distinguished politeness and marked attention. Though I am afraid his Grace's character as a Man of Worth is very equivocal, yet he certainly is a Nobleman of the first taste, and a Gentleman of the first manners.

R. B.

legal guardian of young Mr. Fergusson of Craigdarroch, custodier of that interesting heir-loom. Mr. Maitland was then, and for several years thereafter, an office-bearer in the Club.

(33) TO MRS. DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

Annan Water Foot, 22nd August 1792.

Do not blame me for it, Madam;—my own conscience, hackneyed and weatherbeaten as it is, in watching and reproving my vagaries, follies, indolence, &c., has continued to blame and punish me sufficiently.

* * * * *

Do you think it possible, my dear and honored Friend, that I could be so lost to gratitude for many favors, to esteem for much worth, and to the honest, kind, pleasurable tie of, now, old acquaintance, and I hope and am sure, of progressive, increasing friendship—as, for a single day, not to think of you—to ask the Fates what they are doing and about to do with my much-beloved Friend and her wide-scattered connexions, and to beg of them to be as kind to you and yours as they possibly can?

Apropos (though how it is apropos, I have not leisure to explain), do you not know that I am almost in love with an acquaintance of yours?—Almost! said I—I am in love, souse! over head and ears, deep as the most unfathomable abyss of the boundless ocean; but the word Love, owing to the *intermingledoms* of the good and the bad, the pure and the impure, in this world, being rather an equivocal term for expressing one's sentiments and sensations, I must do justice to the sacred purity of my attachment. Know, then, that the heart-struck awe; the distant humble approach; the delight we should have in gazing upon and listening to a Messenger of Heaven, appearing in all the unspotted purity of his celestial home, among the coarse, polluted, far inferior sons of men, to deliver to

them tidings that make their hearts swim in joy, and their imaginations soar in transport—such, so delighting, and so pure, were the emotions of my soul on meeting the other day with Miss Lesley Bailie, your neighbor, at Mayfield. Mr. B. with his two daughters, accompanied by Mr. H. of G., passing through Dumfries a few days ago, on their way to England, did me the honor of calling on me; on which I took my horse* (though God knows I could ill spare the time), and accompanied them fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them; and, riding home, I composed the following ballad, of which you will probably think you have a dear bargain, as it will cost you another groat of postage. You must know that there is an old ballad beginning with—

“My bonie Lizie Baillie,
I'll rowe thee in my plaidie,” &c.

so I parodied it as follows, which is literally the first copy, “unanointed, unanneal'd,” as Hamlet says:—

O saw ye bonie Lesley,
As she gaed o'er the border?
She's gane, like Alexander,
To spread her conquests farther, &c.

See page 120, *supra*.

So much for ballads. I regret that you are gone to the east country, as I am to be in Ayrshire in about a fortnight. This world of ours, notwithstanding it has many good things in it, yet it has ever had this curse, that two or three people who would be the happier the oftener they met together, are, almost without exception, always so placed as never to meet

* We are not to conclude from this expression, “my horse,” that Burns, with his slender income, was able to purchase and maintain a riding horse. In special journeys to distant places, on excise business, he was permitted to hire a horse and charge it as an item of expenditure.

but once or twice a-year; which, considering the few years of a man's life, is a very great "evil under the sun," which I do not recollect that Solomon has mentioned in his catalogue of the miseries of man. I hope and believe that there is a state of existence beyond the grave, where the worthy of this life will renew their former intimacies, with this endearing addition, that, "we meet to part no more."

* * * * * *

"Tell us, ye dead,
Will none of you in pity disclose the secret,
What 'tis you are, and we must shortly be?"

A thousand times have I made this apostrophe to the departed sons of men, but not one of them has ever thought fit to answer the question. "O that some courteous ghost would blab it out?" but it cannot be: you and I, my friend, must make the experiment by ourselves and for ourselves. However, I am so convinced that an unshaken faith in the doctrines of religion is not only necessary by making us better men, but also by making us happier men, that I shall take every care that your little godson, and every little creature that shall call me father, shall be taught them.

So ends this heterogeneous letter, written at this wild place of the world, in the intervals of my labor of discharging a vessel of rum from Antigua.

R. B.

IV.

T

(¹⁰) TO MR. ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, WRITER,
46 SOUTH HANOVER STREET, EDINBURGH.

SOME LITTLE TIME AFTER HIS MARRIAGE, AND AFTER,
THROUGH HIS RECOMMENDATION, I HAD BEEN
PRESENTED WITH A DIPLOMA FROM THE EDIN-
BURGH COMPANY OF ROYAL ARCHERS.

(CURRIE, 1800.)*

DUMFRIES, 10th September 1792.

NO! I will not attempt an apology. Amid all my hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise; making ballads, and then drinking and singing them to my drink; and, over and above all, the correcting the press-work of two different publications:† still, still I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of my friends and fellow-creatures. I might have done, as I do at present, when I am snatching an hour near “witching time of night,” and scrawling a page or two—I might have congratulated my friend on his marriage; or I might have thanked the Caledonian Archers for the honor they have done me, (though to do myself justice, I intended to have done both in rhyme, else I had done both before now). Well then, here is your good health! for I have set a nipperkin of toddy by me by way of spell to keep away the meikle horned Deil, or any of his subaltern imps who may be on their nightly rounds.

* Currie's version is not so complete as the one in our text, which is taken from the poet's own transcript.

† There can be little doubt that the poet refers here to (1) the forthcoming edition, in two volumes, of his own poems; and (2) to the preparing and correcting of the sheets of Volume V. of Johnson's *Museum*, which however remained unpublished till after his own death.

But what shall I write to you?—"The voice said cry," and I said, "What shall I cry?" O thou Spirit! whatever thou art, or wherever thou makest thyself visible! be thou a Bogle by the eerie side of an auld thorn, in the dreary glen through which the herdcallan maun bicker in his gloamin route frae the fauld! Be thou a Brownie, set, at dead of night, to thy task by the blazing ingle, or in the solitary barn, where the repercussions of thy iron flail half affright thyself, as thou performest the work of twenty of the sons of men, ere the cock-crowing summon thee to thy ample cog of substantial brose. Be thou a Kelpie, haunting the ford or ferry in the starless night, mixing thy laughing yell with the howling of the storm and the roaring of the flood, as thou viewest the perils and miseries of man on the foundering horse, or in the tumbling boat! Or, lastly, be thou a Ghost, paying thy nocturnal visits to the hoary ruins of decayed grandeur; or performing thy mystic rites in the shadow of the time-worn church, while the moon looks, without a cloud, on the silent ghastly dwellings of the dead beside thee; or, taking thy stand by the bedside of the villain, or the murderer, portraying on their dreaming fancy, pictures, dreadful as the horrors of unveiled hell, and terrible as the wrath of incensed Deity!—Come, thou Spirit, but not in these horrid forms: come with the milder, gentle, easy inspirations, which thou breathest round the wig of a prating advocate, or the *tête-à-tête* of a tea-bibbing gossip, while their tongues run at the light-horse gallop of clashmaclaver for ever and ever—come and assist a poor devil who is quite jaded in the attempt to share half an idea among half a hundred words; to fill up four quarto pages, while he has not got one single sentence of recollection, information, or remark worth recording!

I feel, I feel the presence of supernatural assistance!

Circled in the embrace of my elbow-chair, my breast labors like the bloated Sybil on her three-footed stool, and like her, too, labors with Nonsense.—Nonsense, auspicious name! Tutor, friend, and finger-post in the mystic mazes of law; the cadaverous paths of physic; and particularly in the sightless soarings of SCHOOL DIVINITY, who, leaving Common Sense confounded at his strength of pinion; Reason delirious with eyeing his giddy flight; and Truth—creeping back into the bottom of her well, cursing the hour that ever she offered her scorned alliance to the wizard power of Theologic Vision—raves abroad on all the winds:—“On earth Discord! a gloomy Heaven above, opening her jealous gates to the nineteen-thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! and below, an inescapable and inexorable hell, expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals!!!” —O doctrine! comfortable and healing to the weary, wounded soul of man! Ye sons and daughters of affliction, ye *pauvres miserables*, to whom day brings no pleasure and night yields no rest, be comforted! 'Tis but *one* to nineteen hundred thousand that your situation will mend in this world; and 'tis nineteen hundred thousand to one, by the dogmas of Theology, that you will be damned eternally in the world to come! So, alas! the experience of the poor and the needy too truly affirms.

But of all Nonsense, Religious Nonsense is the most nonsensical; so enough, and more than enough of it. Only, by the by, will you, or can you tell me, my dear Cunningham, why a religious turn of mind has always a tendency to narrow and illiberalize the heart? They are orderly; they may be just; nay, I have known them merciful; but still your children of super-sanctity move among their fellow-creatures with a nostril-snuffing putrescence, and a foot—spurning filth; in short, with that conceited dignity that

your titled Douglasses, Hamiltons, Gordons, or any other of your Scottish lordlings, of seven centuries standing, display, when they accidentally mix among the many apron'd sons of mechanical life. I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or that a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys!—Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a ———. But hold (Here's t'ye again!) this rum is damn'd generous Antigua, so a very unfit menstruum for scandal.

Apropos, how do you like—I mean *really* like—the married life? Ah, my friend! matrimony is quite a different thing from what your love-sick youths and sighing girls take it to be! But marriage, we are told, is appointed by God, and I shall never quarrel with any of His institutions. I am a husband of older standing than you, and shall give you *my* ideas of the happiness of the conjugal state (*en passant*—you know I am no Latinist—is not *conjugal* derived from *jugum*, a yoke?). Well then, the scale of good wifeship I divide into ten parts:—Good-nature, *four*; Good Sense, *two*; Wit, *one*; Personal Charms, viz. —a sweet face, eloquent eyes, fine limbs, graceful carriage (I would add a fine waist too, but that is so soon spoilt you know), all these, *One*; as for the other qualities belonging to, or attending on a wife, such as fortune, connections, education (I mean more than the ordinary run), family blood, &c., divide the *Two* remaining degrees among them as you please; only, remember that all these minor properties must be expressed by *fractions*, for there is not any one of them, in my aforesaid scale, entitled to the dignity of an *integer*.

As for the rest of my fancies and reveries—how I lately met with Miss Lesley Baillie, the most beautiful, elegant woman in the world—how I accompanied her

and her father's family fifteen miles on their journey, out of pure devotion, to admire the loveliness of the works of God in such an unequalled display of them—how, as I galloped home at night, I made a ballad on her, of which the two following stanzas are a part:—

Thou, bonie Lesley, art a queen,
Thy subjects we before thee;
Thou, bonie Lesley, art divine,
The hearts o' men adore thee.

The very deil he could na scaith
Whatever wad belang thee?
He'd look into thy bonie face
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

—behold all these are written in the chronicles of my imagination, and shall be read by thee, my dear Friend, and by thy beloved spouse, my other dear Friend, at a more convenient season.

Now, to thee and to thy before-designed *bosom*-companion, be given the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things brought forth by the moon, and the beniguest influences of the stars, and the living streams which flow from the fountains of life, and by the tree of life for ever and ever! Amen!

ROBT. BURNS.*

(²) TO MR. CORBET, SUPERVISOR-GENERAL
OF EXCISE.

(DOUGLASS, 1877.)

[DUMFRIES, *Sep.* 1792.]

SIR,—When I was honored with your most obliging letter, I said to myself, "A simple letter of thanks

* The closing paragraph of this long epistle may be compared with a similar one in the letter to Mr. Peter Hill.

will be a very poor return for so much kindness. I shall likewise send the gentleman a cargo of my best and newest rhymes." However, my new division holds me so very busy, and several things in it being rather new to me, my time has hitherto been totally engrossed. When a man is strongly impressed with a sense of something he ought to do, at the same time that want of leisure, or want of opportunity, or want of assistance, or want of information, or want of paper, pen, and ink, or any other of the many wants which flesh is heir to—when sense of duty pulls one way, and necessity (or, alas! too often indolence under necessity's garb) pulls another—you are too well-acquainted with poor human nature to be told what a devil of a life that arch-vixen Conscience leads us.

Old as I am in acquaintance, and growing grey in connexion, with slips, frips, failings, frailties, backslidings in the paths of grace, and all other light-horse militia of iniquity, never did my poor back suffer such scarification from the scourge of Conscience as during these three weeks that your kind epistle has lain by me unanswered. A negro-wench under the rod of a West India mistress, a nurse under the caprices of a spoilt child, the only son and heir of a booby squire; nay, a hen-pecked husband under the displeasure of his virago wife, were enviable predicaments to mine. At last, by way of compromise, I return you by this my most grateful thanks for all the generous friendship and disinterested patronage for which now and formerly I have the honor to be indebted to you, and as to my rhymes—another edition, in two volumes, of my poems being in the press—I shall beg leave to present a copy to Mrs. Corbet as my first, and I will venture to add, most effectual mediator with you on my behalf,—I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

Early in September 1792 commenced that correspondence betwixt Mr. George Thomson, principal Clerk in the office of the Trustees for the encouragement of Arts and Manufactures, and our Bard, which continued uninterruptedly from that date till the death of the latter. Mr. Thomson was an amateur performer on the violin, who conceived the idea of publishing the select vocal melodies of Scotland, set to new words where the old ones were defective, and embellished with pianoforte accompaniments by the first masters of the art. To Burns that gentleman applied for his aid in improving the old words of popular airs, or in furnishing original words to suit the ancient melodies when necessary. That being an employment very congenial to our poet, he at once sympathised in the scheme, and lent his genius to forward it. We purpose to deal with that lyrical correspondence, as we did with the *Clarinda* episode, in order to obviate a tediously digressive interruption to the current of our author's general correspondence. We shall therefore defer that branch of our subject till we can take up the Thomson correspondence in its entirety and without impediment.

(³⁴) TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 24th Sep. 1792.

I HAVE this moment, my dear Madam, yours of the twenty-third. All your other kind reproaches, your news, &c., are out of my head when I read and think on Mrs. Henri's situation.* Good God! a heart-wounded helpless young woman—in a strange, foreign land, and that land convulsed with every horror that can harrow the human feelings—sick—looking, longing for a comforter, but finding none—a mother's feelings, too—but it is too much: He who wounded—(He only can) may He heal!

* * * *

* This lady who, as the reader knows, was a daughter of Mrs. Dunlop, had gone to the south of France with her infant son, where she died a few days prior to the date of this letter.

I wish the farmer great joy of his new acquisition to his family. * * * * I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis, as a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, a *curSED life*! As to a laird farming his own property; sowing his own corn in hope; and reaping it, in spite of brittle weather, in gladness; knowing that none can say unto him, 'what dost thou?'—fattening his herds; shearing his flocks; rejoicing at Christmas; and begetting sons and daughters, until he be the venerated, grey-haired leader of a little tribe—'tis a heavenly life! but Devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat!

Well, your kind wishes will be gratified, as to seeing me when I make my Ayrshire visit. I cannot leave Mrs. Burns, until her nine months' race is run, which may perhaps be in three or four weeks. She too seems determined to make me the patriarchal leader of a band. However, if Heaven will be so obliging as let me have them in the proportion of three boys to one girl, I shall be so much the more pleased. I hope, if I am spared with them, to shew a set of boys that will do honor to my cares and name! but I am not equal to the task of rearing girls. Besides, I am too poor—a girl should always have a fortune. Apropos: your little godson is thriving charmingly, but is a very devil. He, though two years younger, has completely mastered his brother. Robert is indeed the mildest, gentlest creature I ever saw. He has a most surprising memory, and is quite the pride of his schoolmaster.

You know how readily we get into prattle upon a subject dear to our heart—you can excuse it. God bless you and yours!

R. B.

Notwithstanding the poet's timidity about being a parent of daughters, it so happened that on 21st November of this

year Mrs. Burns brought him a girl, whom he named "Elizabeth Riddell," after the amiable wife of his friend Robert Riddell of Friar's Carse (not, as Chambers has thoughtlessly recorded, after Mrs. Walter Riddell of Woodley Park, whose name was Maria). The child however, was not destined to a long life, for she predeceased her father by ten months, and was buried at Mauchline, whither she had been sent in the hope that change of air might prove beneficial.

(³⁵) TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, October 1792.]

I HAD been from home, and did not receive your letter until my return the other day.* What shall I say to comfort you, my much valued, much afflicted Friend? I can but grieve with you; consolation I have none to offer, except that which Religion holds out to the children of Affliction—(*children of Affliction!* how just the expression!) and like every other family, they have matters among them which they hear, see, and feel in a serious, all-important manner, of which the world has not, nor cares to have, any idea. The world looks indifferently on, makes the passing remark, and proceeds to the next novel occurrence.

Alas, Madam! who would wish for many years! what is it but to drag existence until our joys gradually expire, and leave us in a night of misery; like the gloom which blots out the stars one by one, from the face of night, and leaves us without a ray of comfort in the howling waste!

I am interrupted, and must leave off. You shall soon hear from me again.

R. B.

* A letter informing him of the death of her daughter, Mrs. Henri, Sep. 15, 1792. Died "at Muges, Asguillon, Mrs. Henri, widow of the late James Henri, Esq."—*Scots Mag.*

On 14th November 1792, our bard sent to Mr. George Thomson the most pathetic of all his songs—

“Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o’ Montgomerie;”

(See page 125, *supra*.)

and on the day immediately preceding he penned and forwarded the following letter, which indicates the dangerous political ground on which Burns was now venturing. On June 20th an armed mob forced into the Tuileries, and insulted the King of France, a riotous procedure which was renewed, with cruel aggravation, on the 10th of August, when the King and Queen took refuge in the House of the National Assembly, from which they were sent to prison in the Temple. The Royal Swiss Guards were massacred, and the King’s authority was formally declared at an end. In the beginning of September, Paris flowed with blood for two days, when state-prisoners and all suspected royalists were butchered in the open streets by the infuriated mob; and on 21st September, France was decreed to be a Republic. The combined armies of Austria and Prussia had taken the field with a view to oppose the progress of the French revolution; but, as yet, Britain offered no interference, and the liberal portion of the community, with their political leaders, hitherto seemed to sympathise in the changes that were being effected in France. Paine’s “Essay on the Rights of Man” was widely circulated, and numerous societies sprung up, adopting the title of “Friends of the People,” to promote “a redress of grievances, and a full, free and equal representation of the people in parliament.” Burns, as a matter of course, sided openly with the reforming party, although it does not appear that he joined any of the political societies, which Government soon took means to suppress. In Edinburgh, a certain “Captain Wm. Johnstone” issued the prospectus of a new periodical which he proposed to edit, named “The Edinburgh Gazetteer,” and Burns addressed a letter to him, intimating his wish to be a subscriber.

(¹) TO CAPT. WM. JOHNSTONE, EDINBURGH.

(BLACKIE'S ED., 1846.)

DUMFRIES, 13th November 1792.

SIR,—I have just read your Prospectus of the “Edinburgh Gazetteer.” If you go on in your paper with the same spirit, it will, beyond all comparison, be the first composition of the kind in Europe. I beg leave to insert my name as a subscriber, and if you have already published any papers, please send me them from the beginning. Point out your own way of settling payments in this place, or I shall settle with you through the medium of my friend, Peter Hill, bookseller in Edinburgh.

Go on, Sir! Lay bare with undaunted heart and steady hand that horrid mass of corruption called politics and state-craft. Dare to draw in their native colors those “calm-thinking villains whom no faith can fire,” whatever be the shibboleth of their pretended party.

The address to me at Dumfries will find, Sir, your very humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹) TO MRS. WALTER RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(DR. WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

[DUMFRIES, Nov. 1792.]

MADAM,—I return you my most sincere thanks for the honor you have done me in presenting me with a copy of your Book.* Be assured I shall ever keep it sacred. * * R. B.

* See page 289 *supra*.

(²) TO MRS. WALTER RIDDELL, WOODLEY
PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, *Nov.* 1792.]

I AM thinking to send my "Address" to some periodical publication, but it has not got your sanction : so pray look over it.

As to Tuesday's play, let me beg of you, my dear Madam—let me beg of you to give us "The Wonder, a Woman keeps a Secret;" to which please add "The Spoilt Child." You will highly oblige me by so doing.

Ah, what an enviable creature you are! There now, this cursed gloomy blue-devil day, you are going to a party of choice spirits

——"To play the shapes
Of frolic fancy, and incessant form
Those rapid pictures, that assembled train
Of fleet ideas, never joined before,
Where lively Wit excites to gay surprise;
Or folly-painting Humor, grave himself,
Calls laughter forth, deep shaking every nerve."

But as you rejoice with them that do rejoice, do also remember to weep with them that weep, and pity your melancholy friend.

R. B.

The "Address" referred to in the above note, was that on "The Rights of Woman," given at page 127, *supra*, which was written for Miss Fontenelle, and delivered by her in Dumfries Theatre on her Benefit-night, 26 Nov. 1792. Burns enclosed it to that lady in the following letter.

(¹) TO MISS FONTENELLE, DUMFRIES.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

MADAM,—In such a bad world as ours, those who add to the scanty sum of our pleasures are positively our benefactors. To you, Madam, on our humble Dumfries boards, I have been more indebted for entertainment than ever I was in prouder theatres. Your charms as a woman would insure applause to the most indifferent actress, and your theatrical talents would insure admiration to the plainest figure. This, Madam, is not the unmeaning or insidious compliment of the frivolous or interested; I pay it from the same honest impulse that the sublime of Nature excites my admiration, or her beauties give me delight.

Will the foregoing lines be of any service to you in your approaching benefit night? If they will, I shall be prouder of my muse than ever. They are nearly extempore; I know they have no great merit; but though they should add but little to the entertainment of the evening, they give me the happiness of an opportunity to declare how much I have the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

(³⁶) TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 6th Dec. 1792.

I SHALL be in Ayrshire, I think, next week; and if at all possible, I shall certainly, my much esteemed Friend, have the pleasure of visiting at Dunlop-house.

Alas, Madam! how seldom do we meet in this world, that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on accessions of happiness! I have not passed half

the ordinary term of an old man's life, and yet I scarcely look over the obituary of a newspaper, that I do not see some names that I have known, and which I, and other acquaintances, little thought to meet with there so soon. Every other instance of the mortality of our kind, makes us cast an anxious look into the dreadful abyss of uncertainty, and shudder with apprehension for our own fate. But of how different an importance are the lives of different individuals? Nay, of what importance is one period of the same life, more than another? A few years ago, I could have lain down in the dust, "careless of the voice of the morning;" and now, not a few, and these most helpless individuals, would, on losing me and my exertions, lose both their "staff and shield." By the way, these helpless ones have lately got an addition; Mrs. B. having given me a fine girl since I wrote you. There is a charming passage in Thomson's *Edward and Eleanora*,

"The valiant, *in himself*, what can he suffer?
Or what need he regard his *single* woes," &c.

As I am got in the way of quotations, I shall give you another from the same piece, peculiarly, alas, too peculiarly apposite, my dear Madam, to your present frame of mind;

"Who so unworthy but may proudly deck him
With his fair-weather virtue, that exults
Glad o'er the summer main? The tempest comes,
The rough winds rage aloud; when from the helm
This virtue shrinks, and in a corner lies
Lamenting—Heavens! if privileged from trial,
How cheap a thing were virtue!"

I do not remember to have heard you mention Thomson's dramas. I pick up favorite quotations, and store them in my mind as ready armor, offensive, or defensive, amid the struggle of this turbulent exist-

ence. Of these is one, a very favorite one, from his *Alfred*.

“Attach thee firmly to the virtuous deeds
And offices of life ; to life itself,
With all its vain and transient joys, sit loose.”

Probably I have quoted some of these to you formerly, as indeed when I write from the heart, I am apt to be guilty of such repetitions. The compass of the heart, in the musical style of expression, is much more bounded than that of the imagination ; so the notes of the former are extremely apt to run into one another ; but in return for the paucity of its compass, its few notes are much more sweet. I must still give you another quotation, which I am almost sure I have given you before, but I cannot resist the temptation. The subject is Religion, speaking of its importance to mankind, the author says—

“’Tis this, my friend, that streaks our morning bright.”
(*See Letter to same lady—6th Sept. 1789.*)

I see you are in for double postage, so I shall e’en scribble out t’other sheet. We in this country here have many alarms of the reforming, or rather, the republican spirit of your part of the kingdom. Indeed we are a good deal in commotion ourselves. For me, I am a “placeman,” you know—a very humble one indeed, Heaven knows, but still so much so as to gag me. What my private sentiments are, you will find out without an interpreter.

* * * * *

I have taken up the subject in another view ; and the other day, for a pretty actress’s benefit night, I wrote an Address, which I will give on the other page, called

“THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN.”

I shall have the honor of receiving your criticisms in person at Dunlop. R. B.

(1) TO MISS MARY PEACOCK, EDINBURGH.

(ALDINE EDITION, 1839.)

DUMFRIES, Dec. 6, 1792.

DEAR MADAM,—I have written so often to you and have got no answer, that I had resolved never to lift up a pen to you again; but this eventful day, *the sixth of December*, recalls to my memory such a scene! Heaven and earth! when I remember a far-distant person!—but no more of this until I learn from you a proper address, and why my letters have lain by you unanswered, as this is the third I have sent you. The opportunities will be all gone now I fear, of sending over the book I mentioned in my last. Do not write me for a week, as I shall not be at home, but as soon after that as possible—

Ance mair I hail thee, thou gloomy December!

Ance mair I hail thee wi' sorrow and care;

Dire was the parting thou bidst me remember,

Parting wi' Nancy, oh, ne'er to meet mair!

Yours,

R. B.

“Clarinda’s” visit to the West Indies, in hopes to accomplish a re-union with her husband, had proved a failure. She was coldly received, and was mortified to find him in the midst of a plentiful brood of young Mulattos who called him father. A medical adviser at same time admonished her that in the present state of her health, she could not long bear the effects of a warm climate. She therefore returned by the same vessel that had brought her, and arrived home in August 1792. It is evident from the preceding letter addressed to the “Mary” of the *Clarinda episode*, that the return of Mrs. M’Lehose was yet unknown to Burns. Chambers regards the date of this letter as an instance of the poet’s sensibility to anniversaries, so strongly evidenced in the case of Highland Mary.

About the 12th of December, our bard made a journey into

Ayrshire, resting by the way at his friend Bailie Whigham's Inn at Sanquhar. He seems to have spent a jolly night there, if we are to judge from a song he despatched from thence to his Edinburgh associate, Robert Cleghorn. What his particular errand was does not appear; but he spent four days at Dunlop House, and returned before Christmas to Dumfries, where something not very pleasant was preparing for him.

(⁵) TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON
MILLS, EDINBURGH,

ENCLOSING A TIPLING BALLAD.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

MY DEAR CLEGHORN,—By our good friend Crosbie I send you a song, just finished this moment. May the — follow with a blessing. Amen!

ROBT. BURNS.

SANQUHAR, 12 December 1792.

When Princes and Prelates, and hot-headed zealots
A' Europe had set in a lowe, a lowe,
The poor man lies down, nor envies a crown,
And comforts himself as he dow, dow, dow.

See page 136, supra.

Soon after his return to Dumfries, the poor Bard found, to his dismay, that some malicious person or party had lodged information against him with the Excise authorities, in reference to his political opinions and incautious utterances; and the Dumfries Collector was instructed to inquire into the matter, as appears from the following excited letter to Mr. Graham.

(⁹) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CROMEK, 1803.)

DUMFRIES, Decem. 1792.

SIR,—I have been surprised, confounded, and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the Collector, telling me that

he has received an order from your Board* to enquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government.

Sir, you are a husband and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom, and your helpless, prattling little ones turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected, and left almost without the necessary support of a miserable existence. Alas! Sir, must I think that such soon will be my lot! and from the d—d dark insinuations of hellish, groundless Envy too! I believe, Sir, I may aver it, and in the sight of Omniscience, that I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors, if worse can be, than those I have mentioned, hung over my head, and I say that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British Constitution, on revolution principles, next after my God, I am most devoutly attached! You, Sir, have been much and generously my friend. Heaven knows how warmly I have felt the obligation, and how gratefully I have thanked you. Fortune, Sir, has made you powerful, and me impotent; has given you patronage, and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; were such my insular, unconnected situation, I would despise the tear that now swells in my eye—I could brave misfortune, I could face ruin; for at the worst, “Death’s thousand doors stand open:” but, good God! the tender concerns that I have mentioned, the claims and ties that I see at this moment, and feel around me, how they unnerve courage, and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due: to these,

* The Commissioners at that period were George Brown, Thomas Wharton, James Stodart, Robert Graham (of Fintry,) and John Grieve, Esqrs.

Sir, permit me to appeal ; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me, and which, with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved.

R. B.

The foregoing letter, in the opinion of one of the poet's fondest admirers—Dr. Hately Waddell—is deficient in dignity, and forms, in that respect, a marked contrast with the next letter (10) to the same correspondent, on the same topic.

A.D. 1793.

(³⁷) TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, *Dec. 31, 1792.*

DEAR MADAM,—A hurry of business, thrown in heaps by my absence, has until now prevented my returning my grateful acknowledgements to the good family of Dunlop, and you in particular, for that hospitable kindness which rendered the four days I spent under that genial roof, four of the pleasantest I ever enjoyed.—Alas, my dearest Friend ! how few and fleeting are those things we call pleasures ! On my road to Ayrshire, I spent a night with a friend whom I much valued ; a man whose days promised to be many ; and on Saturday last we laid him in the dust !

[*Jan. 2, 1793.*]

I have just received yours of the 30th, and feel much for your situation. However, I heartily rejoice in your prospect of recovery from that vile jaundice. As to myself, I am better, though not quite free of my complaint. You must not think, as you seem to insinuate, that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough ; but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and

again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned ; it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this country, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over.

Mr. Corbet can be of little service to me at present ; at least I should be shy of applying. I cannot possibly be settled as a supervisor, for several years. I must wait the rotation of the list, and there are twenty names before mine. I might indeed get a job of officiating, where a settled supervisor was ill, or aged ; but that hauls me from my family, as I could not remove them on such an uncertainty. Besides, some envious, malicious devil has raised a little demur on my political principles, and I wish to let that matter settle before I offer myself too much in the eye of my supervisors. I have set, henceforth, a seal on my lips, as to these unlucky politics ; but to you, I must breathe my sentiments. In this, as in everything else, I shall show the undisguised emotions of my soul. War I deprecate ; misery and ruin to thousands are in the blast that announces the destructive demon. But

* * * * *

(CURRIE, 1800.)

5th January 1793.

You see my hurried life, Madam : I can only command starts of time ; however, I am glad of one thing ; since I finished the other sheet, the political blast that threatened my welfare is overblown. I have corresponded with Commissioner Graham, for the board had made me the subject of their animadversions ; and now I have the pleasure of informing you, that all is set to rights in that quarter. Now as to these informers, may the devil be let loose to—— but hold ! I was praying most fervently in my last sheet, and I must not so soon fall aswearing in this.

Alas ! how little do the wantonly or idly officious

think what mischief they do by their malicious insinuations, indirect impertinence, or thoughtless blabblings. What a difference there is in intrinsic worth, candor, benevolence, generosity, kindness,—in all the charities and all the virtues, between one class of human beings and another! For instance, the amiable circle I so lately mixed with in the hospitable hall of Dunlop, their generous hearts—their uncontaminated, dignified minds—their informed and polished understandings—what a contrast, when compared—if such comparing were not downright sacrilege—with the soul of the miscreant who can deliberately plot the destruction of an honest man that never offended him, and with a grin of satisfaction see the unfortunate being, his faithful wife, and prattling innocents, turned over to beggary and ruin!

Your cup, my dear Madam, arrived safe. I had two worthy fellows dining with me the other day, when I, with great formality, produced my whigmeleerie cup,* and told them that it had been a family-piece among the descendants of Sir William Wallace. This roused such an enthusiasm that they insisted on bumpering the punch round in it; and by and by, never did your great ancestor lay a *Suthron* more completely to rest, than for a time did your cup my two friends. Apropos, this is the season of wishing. May God bless you, my dear Friend, and bless me, the humblest and sincerest of your friends, by granting you yet many returns of the season! May all good things attend you and yours, wherever they are scattered over the earth!

R. B.

The concluding paragraph of this letter refers to a curious incident that used to be related by the Rev. Mr. M'Morine,

* This cup, of cocoa-nut mounted on a stalk and rimmed with silver, fell into the possession of the late Archibald Hastie, Esq., M. P. for Paisley, the owner also of the poet's punch-bowl of Inverary marble, now in the British Museum, London.

of Caerlaverock. Burns had met him on the second of January and engaged him to come to his house next forenoon to baptise his recently born infant; and the minister came accordingly, but perhaps at an earlier hour than he was expected. On being shewn into Burns's parlor, he found a party composed of the poet and two companions, who had evidently sat since the previous evening. The description which the clergyman gave of the two visitors corresponds exactly with what Burns hints at in his account of the "whigmeleerie cup." The poet seemed taken by surprise, but in perfect possession of himself, and he very quickly put matters in decent order for the performance of the baptismal ceremony. Chambers, whose narration we borrow, remarks that "Mr. M'Morine, though he clung to Burns's friendship when others of the district clergymen looked coldly on him, used to relate the story with an unfavorable leaning towards the poet. He was shocked by the idea of so prolonged a debauch, and thought meanly of the appearance of the two guests. But he was not aware that there was a special feeling about the *Wallace Cup* which had operated in promoting the conviviality, not to speak of the recognised licence of the New-year season, and in Burns's eyes, his companions were 'two worthy fellows.' "

(¹⁰) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

DUMFRIES, 5th Jan. 1793.

SIR,—I am this moment honored with your letter: with what feelings I received this other instance of your goodness, I shall not pretend to describe.

Now to the charges which malice and misrepresentation have brought against me. It has been said, it seems, that I not only belong to, but head a disaffected party in this place. I know of no party in this place, either Republican or Reform, except an old party of Burgh-reform, with which I never had anything to do. Individuals, both republican and reform, we have, though not many of either: but if they have associated, it is more than I have the least knowledge

of, and if there exists such an association, it must consist of such obscure, nameless beings, as precludes any possibility of my being known to them, or they to me.

I was in the playhouse one night when *CA IRA* was called for. I was in the middle of the pit, and from the pit the clamor arose. One or two individuals, with whom I occasionally associate, were of the party, but I neither knew of the plot, nor joined in the plot, nor ever opened my lips either to hiss or huzza *that*, or any other political tune whatever. I looked on myself as far too obscure a man to have any weight in quelling a riot, and at the same time, as a character of higher respectability than to yell to the howlings of a rabble. This was the conduct of all the first characters in the place; and these characters know, and will avow, that such was my conduct.*

I never uttered any invectives against the king. His private worth it is altogether impossible that such a man as I can appreciate; but in his public capacity I always revered, and always will, with the soundest loyalty, revere the monarch of GREAT BRITAIN, as (to speak in Masonic) the sacred KEYSTONE of OUR ROYAL ARCH CONSTITUTION.

As to REFORM PRINCIPLES, I look upon the British Constitution, as settled at the Revolution, to be the

*It is pleasant to find the poet so candidly recording this incident, which has so often, since then, been told by unfavorable reporters with undue exaggeration. The reader may be amused with the following, which was sent to Allan Cunningham by Mr. Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, and has not yet appeared in print. But as Mr. Sharpe says nothing about "*Cà Ira*," he may refer to a different incident.

"I think you do human nature injustice as to malicious people entrapping Burns in his political conversations; for I know that he was most woefully indiscreet on that point, and I remember one proof. We were at the play in Dumfries, in October 1792—the Caledonian Hunt being then in the town. The play was 'As you like it'; Miss Fontenelle, *Rosalind*, when 'God save the King' was called for and sung; we all stood up uncovered, but Burns sat still in the middle of the pit with his hat on his head. There was a great tumult, with shouts of 'Turn him out!—shame, Burns,' &c., which continued a good while. At last he was either expelled or forced to take off his hat—I forget which; nor can my mother remember. This silly conduct all sensible persons condemned."

most glorious Constitution on earth, or that perhaps the wit of man can frame ; at the same time, I think—and you know what high and distinguished characters have for some time thought so—that we have a good deal deviated from the original principles of that Constitution ; particularly, that an alarming system of corruption has pervaded the connexion between the Executive power and the House of Commons. This is the truth, and the whole truth, of my Reform opinions, which, before I was aware of the complexion of these innovating times, I, too unguardedly (now I see it) sported with ; but henceforth I seal up my lips. However, I never dictated to, corresponded with, or had the least connexion with any political association whatever—except that when the magistrates and principal inhabitants of this town met to declare their attachment to the Constitution, and their abhorrence of riot, which declaration you would see in the papers, I—as I thought my duty as a subject at large, and a citizen in particular, called upon me—subscribed the same declaratory creed.

Of Johnstone, the publisher of the "*Edinburgh Gazetteer*," I know nothing. One evening, in company with four or five friends, we met with his Prospectus, which we thought manly and independent ; and I wrote to him ordering his paper for us. If you think that I act improperly in allowing his paper to come addressed to me, I shall immediately countermand it. I never, so judge me God ! wrote a line of prose for the *Gazetteer* in my life. An occasional address, spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her benefit night here, which I called "The Rights of Woman," I sent to the *Gazetteer*, as also some extempore stanzas on the commemoration of Thomson ; both of these I will subjoin for your perusal. You will see they have nothing whatever to do with politics. At the time when I sent Johnston one of these poems (but which

one I do not remember), I enclosed, at the request of my warm and worthy friend, Robert Riddell, Esq., of Glenriddell, a prose essay signed Cato, written by him, and addressed to the delegates for County Reform, of which he was one for this County. With the merits or demerits of that essay, I have nothing to do, farther than transmitting it in the same frank, which frank he procured me.

As to France, I was her enthusiastic votary in the beginning of the business. When she came to show her old avidity for conquest, in annexing Savoy, &c., to her dominions,* and invading the rights of Holland, I altered my sentiments. A tipling ballad which I made, on Prince of Brunswick's breaking up his camp, and sung one convivial evening, I shall likewise send you, sealed up, as it is not for everybody's reading. This last is not worth your perusal; but lest MRS. FAME should, as she has already done, use and even abuse her old privilege of lying, you shall be the master of everything, *le pour et le contre*, of my political writings and conduct.

This, my honored Patron, is all. To this statement I challenge disquisition. Mistaken prejudice, or unguarded passion, may mislead, and have often misled me; but when called on to answer for my mistakes, though—I will say it—no man can feel keener compunction for his errors, yet I trust, no man can be more superior to evasion or disguise.

I shall do myself the honor to thank Mrs. Graham for her goodness in a separate letter.

If, Sir, I have been so fortunate as to do away with these misapprehensions of my conduct and character, I shall, with the confidence which you were wont to allow me, apply to your goodness on every opening in the way of business where I think I with propriety

* Savoy was annexed to France, 27th November 1792.

may offer myself—An instance that occurs just now. Mr. M'Farlane, Supervisor of the Galloway district, is and has been for sometime very ill. I spoke to Mr. Mitchell as to his wishes to forward my application for the job; but though he expressed, and ever does express, every kindness for me, he hesitates, in hopes that the disease may be of short continuance. However, as it seems to be a paralytic affection, I fear that it may be some time ere he can take charge of so extended a district. There is a great deal of fatigue and very little business in the district—two things suitable enough to my hardy constitution, and inexperience in that line of life.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your ever grateful, and as highly obliged, humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(2) TO MRS. GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

THE RIGHTS OF WOMAN,*

An Occasional Address, spoken by Miss Fontenelle on her Benefit night, 26 Novr. 1792.

See page 127, supra.

To Mrs. Graham of Fintry, this little Poem, written in haste on the spur of the occasion, and therefore inaccurate, but a sincere compliment to that sex, the *most amiable of the works of God*, is most respectfully presented by

THE AUTHOR.

DUMFRIES, 5 Jan. 1793.

* The title and subject adopted by Burns in this Theatrical Address are intimately associated with the name of Mary Wollstonecraft, an interesting authoress, cotemporary with Burns, whose life and writings are still remembered with respect. Like Clarinda, she was born in the same year with our poet, and like her was a strange compound of religious enthusiasm and romantic devotion to the object of her fancy. At the age of thirty-two, in the same year that

At this unhappy period, the bard looked to his Muse for consolation. Jean Lorimer, about the beginning of 1793, came to reside in Dumfries, and the spell of her charms was soon thrown over him. During this month he produced the beautiful songs "Gala Water," "Poortith Cauld," and "Lord Gregory." Above all, on the morning of his own Birthday, the following sweet sonnet was suggested to him on hearing a thrush utter its melting notes amid the bleakness of winter.

Sing on, sweet thrush, upon the leafless bough,
Sing on, sweet bard, I listen to thy strain;
See aged Winter, 'mid his surly reign,
At thy blythe carol clears his furrow'd brow.

So, in lone Poverty's dominion drear,
Sits meek Content with light unanxious heart;
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,
Nor asks if they bring ought to hope or fear.

I thank thee, Author of this opening day!
Thou whose bright sun now gilds yon orient skies!
Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys—
What Wealth could neither give nor take away!

Yet come, thou child of Poverty and care,
The mite high Heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I'll share.

We may now consider that the "political blast which threatened our Bard's welfare is overblown," and everything "set to rights with the Board;" even under the cruel impediment that "all hopes of his getting officially forward are blasted." The following amusing letter from his old friend William Nicol of the High School, Edinburgh, will indicate what kind of rumors had reached "the buckish tradesmen and stately patri-cians" of the capital about the affair.

Paine produced his "Rights of Man," she published "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." The book is an appeal against Rousseau's theory that women were made for the pleasure of man, and that their education should fit them to be our mistresses rather than our companions. It protests against the false gallantries which lower women under pretext of raising them, and claims for them a perfect social and political equality with man. She had hitherto lived a blameless single life; but, attracted by the inviting aspect of the dawn of the French Revolution, she removed from London to Paris, where, in the spring of 1793, she attached herself to, and lived with, Gilbert Imlay, an American, who eventually turned out to be a heartless fellow. He deserted her after the birth of a child, and returning to London, she attempted to drown herself about the close of 1795. She was rescued, and six months thereafter became the wife of the eccentric William Godwin. On 10th September 1797 she died in giving birth to a daughter, who afterwards became the wife of the poet Shelley, and survived to 1851.

MR. WILLIAM NICOL TO ROBERT BURNS.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

EDINBURGH, 10th February 1793.

DEAR CHRISTLESS BOBBIE,—What is become of thee? Has the Devil flown off with thee, as the gled does with a bird? If he should do so there is little matter, if the reports concerning thy *imprudence* are true. What concerns it thee whether the lousy Dumfriesian fiddlers play "Cà Ira," or "God save the King"? Suppose you *had* an aversion to the King, you could not, as a gentleman, wish God to use him worse than he has done. The infliction of idiocy is no sign of Friendship, or Love; and I am sure damnation is a matter far beyond your wishes or ideas. But reports of this kind are only the insidious suggestions of ill-minded persons; for your good sense will ever point out to you, as well as to me, a bright model of political conduct, who flourished in the victorious reign of Queen Anne, viz., the Vicar of Bray, who, during the convulsions of Great Britain which were without any former example, saw eight reigns, in perfect security; because he remembered that precept of the *sensible, shrewd, temporising* Apostle, "We ought not to resist the Higher Powers."

You will think I have gotten a pension from the Government; but I assure you, no such a thing has been offered me. In this respect my vanity prompts me to say, they have not been so *wise* as I would have wished them to be; for I think their Honors have often employed as impotent scribblers.

* We print this letter in the type of the text, because Burns inscribed it in his own holograph, among his own letters in the Glenriddell collection. The reader has here an opportunity to judge of the correctness of Lockhart's estimate of Nicol's letters, quoted in our footnote at page 305, Vol. II.

Enough of Politics. What is become of Mrs. Burns and the dear bairns? How is my Willie? Tell her, though I do not write often my best wishes shall ever attend her and the family. My wife, who is in a high devotional fit this evening, wishes that she and her children may be reckoned the favorites of the Lord, and numbered with the elect. She indeed leaves your honor and me to shift for ourselves; as, so far as she can judge from the criteria laid down in Guthrie's "Trial of a Saving Interest" that both you and I are stamped with the marks of Reprobation.

May all the curses from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation light, materially and effectually, on thy enemies; and may all the blessings of the Covenant be eminently exemplified in thy person, to the glory of a forgiving Deity!

Here, or elsewhere, I am always thine sincerely,

WILL^M. NICOL.

The above letter is introduced under the following heading:—"From my worthy friend, Mr. Nicol, of the High School, Edinburgh, alluding to some temeraire conduct of mine, in the political opinions of the day." Burns made the following reply, which has hitherto been misplaced in the chronology of our author's correspondence.

(^o) TO MR. WILLIAM NICOL, EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800, in part, and here completed).

DUMFRIES, 20th Feb. 1793.

O THOU, wisest among the Wise, meridian blaze of Prudence, full-moon of Discretion, and chief of many Counsellors! How infinitely is thy puddle-headed, rattle-headed, wrong-headed, round-headed slave indebted to thy super-eminent goodness, that from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the

zig-zag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units, up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! May one feeble ray of that light of wisdom which darts from thy sensorium, straight as the arrow of heaven, and bright as the meteor of inspiration descending from the holy and undefiled Priesthood against the head of the Unrighteous,—may it be my portion, so that I may be less unworthy of the face and favor of that father of Proverbs and master of Maxims, that antipode of Folly, and magnate among the Sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol! Amen! Amen! Yea, so be it!

For me! I am a beast, a reptile, and know nothing! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon, to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing in bitterness of soul, I say, When shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills?* As for him, his works are perfect: never did the pen of Calumny blur the fair page of his reputation, nor the bolt of Hatred fly at his dwelling. At his approach is the standing up of men, even the Chiefs and the Rulers; and before his presence the frail form of lovely Woman, humbly awaiting his pleasure, is extended on the dust.

Thou mirror of Purity, when shall the elfin-lamp of my glimmerous understanding, purged from sensual appetites and gross desires, shine like the constellation of thy intellectual powers!—As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy. Never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness, and the pleasures of darkness, pollute the sacred flame of

* The reference here is to a small estate called Laggan, in the parish of Glencairn, Dumfriesshire, near Maxwellton, bought by Nicol in 1790.

thy sky-descended and heavenward desires ; never did the vapors of impurity stain the unclouded serene of thy cerulean imagination. O that like thine were the tenor of my life, like thine the tenor of my conversation ! then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness ! Then should I lie down and rise up, and none to make me afraid. May thy pity and thy prayer be exercised for—O thou lamp of Wisdom and mirror of Morality !

Thy devoted slave, ROBT. BURNS.

(¹¹) TO ALEXANDER CUNNINGHAM, ESQ.,
EDINBURGH.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

DUMFRIES, 20th Feb. 1793.

WHAT are you doing? What hurry have you got on your head, my dear Cunningham, that I have not heard from you? Are you deeply engaged in the mazes of the law, the mysteries of love, or in the profound wisdom of modern politics?—Curse on the word which ended the period !

Quere.—What is Politics?

Answer.—Politics is a science wherewith, by means of nefarious cunning and hypocritical pretence, we govern civil politics for the emolument of ourselves and adherents.

Quere.—What is a Minister?

Answer.—A Minister is an unprincipled fellow, who, by the influence of hereditary or acquired wealth—by superior abilities, or by a lucky conjuncture of cir-

* The holograph was in the possession of the late James Cunningham, Esq., W. S., son of the poet's correspondent. The father died in 1812, and the son in 1878.

cumstances, obtains a principal place in the administration of the affairs of government.

Quere.—What is a Patriot?

Answer.—A Patriot is an individual exactly of the same description as a Minister, only out of place.

I am interrupted in my catechism, and am returned at a late hour, just to subscribe my name, to put you in mind that there is a forgotten friend of yours of that name, still in the land of the living, though I can hardly say, “in the place of hope.”

I made the following Sonnet the other day, which has been so lucky as to obtain the approbation of no ordinary judge—our friend Syme.

“*Sonnet on hearing a thrush in a morning walk,*
25th January, 1793.”

Adieu,

ROBT. BURNS.

(3) TO MRS. WALTER RIDDELL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[DUMFRIES, Feb. 1793.]

MADAM,—You were so very good as to promise me to honor my friend with your presence on his benefit night. That night is fixed for Friday first; the play a most interesting one—“The way to keep him.” I have the pleasure to know Mr. G. very well. His merit as an actor is generally acknowledged. He has genius and worth which would do honor to patronage: he is a poor and modest man; claims which, from their very *silence*, have the more forcible power on the generous heart. Alas, for pity! that through the indolence of those who have the good things of life in their gift, too often does brazen-fronted importunity snatch that boon, the rightful due of retiring humble want! Of all the qualities we assign to the Author and Director of Nature, by far the most enviable is—

to be able "to wipe away all tears from all eyes." O what insignificant, sordid wretches are they, however chance may have loaded them with wealth, who go to their graves, to their magnificent mausoleums, with hardly the consciousness of having made one poor, honest heart happy!

But I crave your pardon, Madam; I came to beg,
not to preach, R. B.

(³) TO WILLIAM CREECH, ESQ., BOOKSELLER.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

DUMFRIES, 28th Feb. 1793.

SIR,—I understand that my book is published, I beg that you will, as soon as possible, send me twenty copies of it. As I mean to present them among a few Great Folk whom I respect, and a few Little Folk whom I love; these twenty will not interfere with your sale. If you have not twenty copies ready, send me any number you can. It will confer a particular obligation to let me have them by first carrier.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your obedient, humble
servant, ROBT. BURNS.

(⁴) TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ., DRUMLANRIG.

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(HOGG AND MOTHERWELL'S ED., 1835.)

DUMFRIES, March 1793.

WILL Mr. M'Murdo do me the favor to accept of these volumes? a trifling but sincere mark of the very high respect I bear for his worth as a man, his man-

* From the holograph of the poet, in possession of Mr. Creech's relatives.

ners as a gentleman, and his kindness as a friend. However inferior now; or afterwards, I may rank as a poet, one honest virtue to which few poets can pretend, I trust I shall ever claim as mine—to no man, whatever his station in life, or his power to serve me, have I ever paid a compliment at the expense of TRUTH,
THE AUTHOR.

(¹) TO THE EARL OF GLENCAIRN,*

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, *March* 1793.

MY LORD,—When you cast your eye on the name at the bottom of this letter, and on the title page of the book I do myself the honor to send your Lordship, a more pleasurable feeling than my vanity tells me that it must be a name not entirely unknown to you. The generous patronage of your late illustrious brother found me in the utmost obscurity: he introduced my rustic muse to the partiality of my country; and to him I owe all. My sense of his goodness, and the anguish of my soul at losing my truly noble protector and friend, I have endeavored to express in a poem to his memory, which I have now published. This edition is just from the press; and in my gratitude to the dead and my respect for the living (Fame belies you, my Lord, if you possess not the same dignity of man, which was your noble brother's characteristic feature), I had destined a copy for the Earl of Glencairn. I learnt just now that you are in town: allow me to present it you.

I know, my Lord, such is the vile, venal contagion

* John, 15th Earl; see notice of him, page 247, *supra*.

which pervades the whole world of letters, that professions of respect from an author, particularly from a Poet to a Lord, are more than suspicious. I claim my by-past conduct, and my feelings at this moment, as exceptions to the too just conclusion. Exalted as are the honors of your Lordship's name, and unnoted as is the obscurity of mine, with the uprightness of an honest man I come before your Lordship, with an offering, however humble—'tis all I have to give—of my grateful respect; and to beg of you, my Lord—'tis all I have to ask of you—that you will do me the honor to accept of it.

I have the honor to be, your Lordship's humble
servant,
ROBT. BURNS.

(³) TO MRS. GRAHAM OF FINTRY.

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(WALKER'S ED., 1811.)

DUMFRIES, *March 1793.*

It is probable, Madam, that this page may be read when the hand that now writes it shall be mouldering in the dust: may it then bear witness that I present you these volumes as a tribute of gratitude on my part ardent and sincere, as your and Mr. Graham's goodness to me has been generous and noble! May every child of yours, in the hour of need, find such a friend as I shall teach every child of mine, that their father found in you!

ROBT. BURNS.

(4) TO ROBT. RIDDELL, ESQ., OF GLEN-
RIDDELL,

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

DUMFRIES, *March* 1793.

WHEN you and I, my dear Sir, have passed that
bourne whence no traveller returns, should these vol-
umes survive us, I wish the future reader of this page
to be informed that they are the pledge of Friendship,
ardent and grateful on my part, as it was kind and
generous on yours. That Enjoyment may mark your
days, and Pleasure number your years, is the earnest
prayer of, my dear Sir—Your much indebted Friend,
THE AUTHOR.

Among the documents which passed through the hands of
Dr. Currie, but were not used by him in his edition of the
“Life and Works of Burns,” was a letter addressed to the
poet at this period by Miss Deborah Duff Davies—the “Bonie
wee Thing” of his well-known lyric—who had removed to
France for the sake of its milder climate. We nowhere find
the date of her death recorded, but apparently she did not out-
live Burns. The “Mr. Gordon” mentioned in her letter was
the Hon. Adam Gordon, who, after the lady’s decease, sent
the following lines to Dr. Maxwell of Dumfries, as her epi-
taph:—

“The boisterous world was never meant for thee,
Fair bud of virtuous sensibility!
On Earth no longer God would let her stay,
And fondly called her to Himself away:
The mandate she obeyed, well satisfied,
And—loved by all, by all lamented—died.”

MISS DEBORAH D. DAVIES TO ROBERT BURNS.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

SIR,—How can I return you thanks for one favor, when I mean to solicit another?—which is, that you will be so indulgent as to send me a copy of the song you shewed to me at Woodley Park—copied by your own hand, to render it more valuable. I might get it from the Collection,* but that is not what I wish; as you flattered me by saying that you had some faint idea of my insignificant person when you wrote it. You will laugh at my credulity, as it might have been written on one more worthy of the encomiums you have bestowed in it upon the person you had in view. If this is the case, I still think it has so much merit and simplicity in it, and the thoughts altogether so new, that I cannot help admiring it.

And now give me leave to thank you for the favors I this morning received by Mr. Gordon, which I shall carefully keep in remembrance, as a flattering proof of your attention that can never be obliterated from the mind of

D. D. DAVIES.

FONTAINEBLEAU, *March 14, 1793.*

The foregoing reached the hands of Mr. Douglas while his edition of 1877 was in course of publication, see page 271 *supra*. Accompanying the lady's letter is the Epitaph in the handwriting of Mr. Gordon, together with a lock of brown hair, supposed to be that of "Lovely Davies." See also page 38 *supra*.

(¹) TO MISS BENSON, YORK.†

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 21st of *March 1793.*

MADAM,—Among many things for which I envy those hale long-lived old fellows before the flood, is

* Johnson's Museum, song 341, or "Lovely Davies," song 349.

† Afterwards Mrs. Basil Montague.

this in particular, that when they met with anybody after their own heart, they had a charming long prospect of many, many happy meetings with them in after-life.

Now in this short, stormy winter day of our fleeting existence, when you now and then, in the Chapter of Accidents, meet an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you, that you shall never meet with that valued character more. On the other hand, brief as this miserable being is, it is none of the least of the miseries belonging to it, that if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill-run of the chances shall be so against you, that in the overtakings, turnings and jostlings of life, pop! at some unlucky corner, eternally comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt a moment's repose. As I am a sturdy believer in the Powers of darkness, I take these to be the doings of that old author of mischief, the Devil. It is well-known that he has some kind of short-hand way of taking down our thoughts, and I make no doubt that he is perfectly acquainted with my sentiments respecting Miss Benson; how much I admired her abilities and valued her worth, and how very fortunate I thought myself in her acquaintance. For this last reason, my dear Madam, I must entertain no hopes of the very great pleasure of meeting with you again.

Miss Hamilton* tells me that she is sending a

* Daughter of Captain Hamilton, his landlord, a connexion of Mr. Craik of Arbigland, *see* page 366, Vol. III. It was at Arbigland that the poet met with Miss Benson, who thus recorded a reminiscence of that meeting:—"I dined with Mr. Burns at Arbigland; he was witty, drank as others drank, and was long in coming to the tea-table. It was then the fashion for young ladies to be busy with something—I was working a flower, and asked the poet if he would do a bit of my work. 'Oh,' said he, 'you think my hand is unsteady with wine, I cannot work a flower, Madam, but I can thread a needle.' He pulled the thread from the needle, and re-threaded it in a moment—'Can a tipsy man do that?' He talked to me of his children, particularly his eldest boy, whom he praised as a lad of promise. 'And yet, Madam,' he said with a sarcastic glance, 'I hope he will turn out a glorious blockhead, and so make his fortune.'"

packet to you, and I beg leave to send you the enclosed Sonnet,* though, to tell you the real truth, the sonnet is a mere pretence, that I may have the opportunity of declaring with how much respectful esteem I have the honor to be, &c., R. B.

(¹) TO THE HON. THE LORD PROVOST, BAILIES,
AND TOWN COUNCIL OF DUMFRIES.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

March 1793.

MY LORD AND GENTLEMEN,—The literary taste and liberal spirit of your good town has so ably filled the various departments of your schools, as to make it a very great object for a parent to have his children educated in them. Still, to me, a stranger, with my large family, and very stinted income, to give my young ones that education I wish, at the high school-fees which a stranger pays, will bear hard upon me.

Some years ago your good town did me the honor of making me an Honorary Burgess.—Will your honors allow me to request that this mark of distinction may extend so far, as to put me on the footing of a real Freeman of the Town, in the schools?

That I may not appear altogether unworthy of this favor, allow me to state to you some little services I have lately done to a branch of your revenue. The two-pennies exigible on foreign ale vended within your limits—in this rather neglected article of your income I am ready to shew that, within these few weeks, my exertions have secured for you of those duties nearly the sum of Ten pounds; and in this too, I was the only one of the gentlemen of the Excise (except Mr.

* The Sonnet was probably that on his own birthday, 1793.

Mitchell, whom *you* pay for his trouble) who took the least concern in the business.*

If you are so very kind as to grant my request, it will certainly be a constant incentive to me to strain every nerve where, in that or any other way, I can officially serve you; and will, if possible, increase that grateful respect with which I have the honor to be,

My Lord and Gentlemen, your devoted, humble serv^t.

ROBT. BURNS.

The prayer of the petition was immediately granted, and the poet's eldest boy Robert, then seven years old, was received into the Academy or Grammar School of the burgh.

(³) TO MR. WHITE, TEACHER, DUMFRIES
ACADEMY,

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

April 1793.

MR. WHITE will accept of this Book as a mark of the most sincere Friendship from a man who has ever had too much respect for his Friends, and too much contempt for his enemies, to flatter either the one or the other,

THE AUTHOR.

(¹) TO PATRICK MILLER, ESQ., OF DAL-
SWINTON,

WITH THE NEW EDITION OF THE AUTHOR'S POEMS.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, *April*, 1793.

SIR,—My poems having just come out in another edition, will you do me the honor to accept of a copy?

* This paragraph, which perhaps is not in the best of taste, had been omitted by previous editors till Dr. Waddell inserted it. Our collation has been made from the original MS. in the British Museum, London.

A mark of my gratitude to you, as a gentleman to whose goodness I have been much indebted ; of my respect for you, as a patriot who, in a venal, sliding age, stands forth the champion of the liberties of my country ; and of my veneration for you as a man, whose benevolence of heart does honor to human nature.

There *was* a time, Sir, when I was your dependant ; this language *then* would have been like the vile incense of flattery—I could not have used it. Now that that connexion is at an end, do me the honor to accept of this *honest* tribute of respect from, Sir, your much indebted, humble servant, ROBT. BURNS.

Notwithstanding his assertion in January of this year to Mrs. Dunlop, that henceforth he would “set a seal on his lips as to these unlucky politics,” Burns was by no means a silent observer of the progress of events in France. When Dumouriez, after achieving great victories over the armed enemies of the Republic, suddenly deserted the French army, on April 5, 1793, some person in the poet’s hearing having expressed joy over that renegade step, as a triumph to the cause of order, Burns immediately chanted his well-known parody of “Robin Adair,” improvised on the spot:—

“You’re welcome to Despots, Dumouriez,”

See page 160, supra.

John Francis Erskine, Esq., of Mar, grandson of the rebel earl of 1715, and recently restored to his ancestral privileges, having been told that Burns was placed under a species of official persecution in consequence of the liberality of his opinions, put himself in communication with Mr. Riddell of Glenriddell, expressing his sympathy for the poet, and suggesting means to relieve him from his thralldom. This brought forth a grateful letter from Burns addressed to Mr. Erskine, characterised by Dr. Currie as displaying “great elevation of sentiment,” in which, while giving an account of the whole transaction, he “defends himself from the imputation of disloyalty on the one hand, and from the charge of having made unworthy submissions on the other hand, for the sake of his office.” We take the text of that letter from the Glenriddell MSS., where the author has headed it with the following Preface, hitherto unpublished.

(¹) TO JOHN FRANCIS ERSKINE, ESQ., OF
MAR.

(CURRIE and CROMEK, in part, and completed, DOUGLAS, 1877.)

IN the year 1792-93, when Royalist and Jacobin had set all Britain by the ears—because I unguardedly, rather under the temptation of being witty than disaffected, had declared my sentiments in favor of Parliamentary Reform, in the manner of that time, I was accused to the Board of Excise of being a Republican, and was very near being turned adrift in the wide world on that account, Mr. Erskine of Mar, a *gentleman* indeed, wrote to my friend Glenriddell to know if I was really out of place on account of my political principles, and if so, he proposed a subscription among the friends of Liberty for me, which he offered to head, that I might be no pecuniary loser by my political Integrity. This was the more generous, as I had not the honor of being known to Mr. Erskine.* I wrote to him as follows :—

DUMFRIES, 13th April, 1793.

SIR,—Degenerate as human nature is said to be—and in many instances worthless and unprincipled it certainly is—still there are bright examples to the contrary ; examples that, even in the eyes of superior beings, must shed a lustre on the name of man.

Such an example have I now before me, when you, Sir, came forward to patronize and befriend a distant, obscure stranger, merely because poverty had made him helpless, and his British hardihood of mind had provoked the arbitrary wantonness of power. My much esteemed friend, Mr. Riddell of Glenriddell, has just read me a paragraph of a letter he had from you.

* Died at Edinburgh, Aug. 21, 1825, the Right Hon. John Francis Erskine, Earl of Mar.—*Scots Mag.*

Accept, Sir, of the silent throb of gratitude! For words would but mock the emotions of my soul.

You have been misinformed as to my final dismissal from the Excise; I am still in the service.—Indeed, but for the exertions of a gentleman who must be known to you, Mr. Graham of Fintry, a gentleman who has ever been my warm and generous friend, I had, without so much as a hearing, or the smallest previous intimation, been turned adrift, with my helpless family, to all the horrors of want. Had I had any other resource, probably I might have saved them the trouble of a dismissal; but the little money I gained by my publication is, almost every guinea, embarked to save from ruin an only brother, who, though one of the worthiest, is by no means one of the most fortunate of men.

In my defence to their accusations, I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I abjured the idea!—That a CONSTITUTION which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory,—that, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne taking any active part, either personally, or as an author, in the present business of REFORM; but that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature, which boded no good to our glorious CONSTITUTION; and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended.—Some such sentiments as these I stated in a letter to my generous patron, Mr. Graham, which he laid before the Board at large; where, it seems, my last remark gave great offence; and one of our supervisors-general, a Mr. Corbet, was instructed

to enquire on the spot, into my conduct, and to document me,—“that *my* business was to *act*, not to think; and that whatever might be men or measures, it was for me to be silent and obedient.”

Mr. Corbet was likewise my steady friend; so between Mr. Graham and him, I have been partly forgiven: only, I understand that all hopes of my getting officially forward are blasted.

Now, Sir, to the business in which I would more immediately interest you. The partiality of my countrymen has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a Character to support. In the Poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments, which I trust will be found in the Man. Reasons of no less weight than the support of a wife and children, have pointed out as the eligible, and indeed, the only eligible line of life for me, my present occupation. Still my honest fame is my dearest concern; and a thousand times have I trembled at the idea of the degrading epithets that Malice or Misrepresentation may affix to my name. I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney magazine scribbler, with the heavy malice of savage stupidity, exulting in his hiring paragraphs that “Burns, notwithstanding the fanfaronade of Independence to be found in his works, and after having been held forth to public view and to public estimation as a man of some genius; yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, he dwindled into a paltry Exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the vilest of mankind.”

In your illustrious hands, Sir, permit me to lodge my strong disavowal, and defiance of these slanderous falsehoods. Burns was a poor man from birth, and an exciseman by necessity; but I will say it! the

sterling of his honest worth no poverty could debase, and his independent British mind, oppression might bend, but could not subdue. Have not I, to me, a more precious stake in my country's welfare than the richest dukedom in it?—I have a large family of children, and the probability of more. I have three sons, who, I see already, have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of SLAVES.—Can I look tamely on, and see any machination to wrest from them the birthright of my boys—the little independent BRITONS, in whose veins runs my own blood?—No! I will not! should my heart's blood stream around my attempt to defend it!

Does any man tell me, that my feeble efforts can be of no service, and that it does not belong to my humble station to meddle with the concerns of a people? I tell him, that it is on such individuals as I that, for the hand of support and the eye of intelligence, a nation has to rest. The uniformed MOB may swell a nation's bulk; and the titled, tinsel, courtly throng may be its feathered ornament; but the number of those who are elevated enough in life to reason and to reflect, and yet low enough to keep clear of the venal contagion of a court!—these are a nation's strength.

One small request more—when you have honored this letter with a perusal, please commit it to the flames. BURNS, in whose behalf you have so generously interested yourself, I have here in his native colors drawn as he is; but should any of the people in whose hands is the very bread he eats get the least knowledge of the picture, it would ruin the poor BARD for ever!

My poems having just come out in another edition, I beg leave to present you with a copy, as a small mark of that high esteem and ardent gratitude, with which I have the honor to be, Sir, your deeply indebted, and ever devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

On the first of February preceding, the French Convention had declared war against Great Britain,—just ten days after they had beheaded the unfortunate king of France; and from that time more or less during upwards of twenty years, was embroiled in a martial struggle with that country both by sea and land. In the month of April, our poet composed one of his tenderest ballads:—"The Sodger's Return," hopefully looking forward to a day he did not live to see—

"When wild War's deadly blast is blawn,
And gentle Peace returning."

The pathetic picture in Professor Fergusson's house which brought the tear into his eye in presence of young Walter Scott, recurred to his thoughts when he framed the couplet which completes the opening stanza of the ballad:—

"Wi' mony a sweet babe fatherless,
And mony a widow mourning."

(¹³) MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER, EDINBURGH.

(CHAMBERS, 1852, in part, and completed DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

DUMFRIES, *April* 1793.

I WOULD have written you sooner, my dear Friend; but as our Treasurer was out of town until to-day, I did not wish to write except I could write to the purpose. To-day, I believe, our T. remits you the cash; on Monday next our committee meet, when you shall have a new order.

I hope and trust that this unlucky blast which has over-turned so many (and many worthy characters who, four months ago, little dreaded any such thing), will spare my Friend.

Oh! may the wrath and curse of all mankind haunt and harass these turbulent, unprincipled miscreants who have involved a People in this ruinous business!

* From the original MS., now possessed by George Wilson, Esq., of Dalmarnock.

I have not a moment more. Blessed be he that blesseth thee, and cursed be he that curseth thee! And the wretch whose envious malice would injure thee, may the Giver of every good and perfect gift say unto him—"Thou shalt not prosper!" R. B.

(⁴) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(DR. WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

FRIDAY, NOON, [*April* 1793.]

* * * * I MUST tell you that all the haberdashers here are on the alarm as to the necessary article of French gloves. You must know that French gloves are contraband goods, and expressly forbidden by the laws of this wisely-governed realm of ours. A satirist would say this is the reason why the ladies are so fond of them; but I, who have not one grain of *gall* in my composition, shall allege that it is the patriotism of the dear goddess of man's idolatry that makes them so fond of dress from the land of liberty and equality.

. . . . I have discovered one haberdasher who, at my request, will clothe your fair hands as they ought to be, to keep them from being profaned by the rude gaze of the gloating eye, or (horrid!) by the unhalloved lips of that Satyr man.

So much for this important matter. I have received a long letter from Mr. Thomson, who presides over the publication of Scotch music, &c., which I mentioned to you. Would you honor the publication with a song from you? I have just sent him a new song to "The last time I came o'er the moor;"* but I don't know if I have succeeded. I enclose it for your

* See page 162 *supra*.

strictures. *Mary* was the name I intended my heroine to bear, but I altered it into your ladyship's as being infinitely more musical R. B.

(⁵) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(DR. WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

[*April* 1793.]

ON Monday, my dear Madam, I shall most certainly do myself the honor of waiting on you, whether the Muses will wait on me is, I fear, dubious. Please accept a new song which I have this moment received from Urbani. It is a trifling present, but "Give all thou can'st."

R. B.

(⁶) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[*April* 1793.]

I HAVE often told you, my dear friend, that you had a spice of caprice in your composition, and you have as often disavowed it; even perhaps while your opinions were, at the moment, irrefragably proving it. Could *anything* estrange me from a friend such as you? No! To-morrow I shall have the honor of waiting on you.

Farewell, thou first of friends, and most accomplished of women; even with all thy little caprices!

R. B.

(¹⁵) TO ROBERT AINSLIE, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

[*April* 26th 1793.]

I AM d—nably out of humor, my dear Ainslie, and that is the reason why I take up the pen to *you*: 'tis

the nearest way (*probatum est*) to recover my spirits again.

I received your last, and was much entertained with it; but I will not at this time, or at any other time, answer it.—Answer a letter! I never could answer a letter in my life!—I have written many a letter in return for letters I have received; but then—they were original matter—spurtaway! zig, here; zag, there; as if the devil that, my grannie (an old woman indeed!) often told me, rode on Will-o'-wisp, or, in her more classic phrase, SPUNKIE, were looking over my elbow.—Happy thought that idea has engendered in my head! SPUNKIE,—thou shalt henceforth be my symbol, signature, and tutelary genius! Like thee, hap-step-and-lowpp, here-awa-there-awa, higglety, pig-glety, pell-mell, hither-and-yon, ram-stam, happy-go-lucky, up tails-a'-by-the-light-o'-the-moon; has been, is, and shall be, my progress through the mosses and moors of this vile, bleak, barren wilderness of a life of ours.

Come then, my guardian Spirit; like thee, may I skip away, amusing myself by and at my own light: and if any opaque-souled lubber of mankind complain that my elfine, lambent, glimmerous wanderings have misled his stupid steps over precipices, or into bogs; let the thick headed blunderbuss recollect, that he is not SPUNKIE:—that

Spunkie's wanderings could not copied be;
Amid these perils none durst walk but he—*

* * * * *

*In 1834 the Ettrick Shepherd made a note here, thus:—"What a strange hipperty-skipperty letter this is to Ainslie! that is to say, to Ainslie as we know him now—the author of "The Father's Gift," and many beautiful little religious works! Ainslie, since ever I knew him,—and that is considerably upwards of twenty years, has been much the same—a downright honest, sleepy-headed, kind-hearted gentleman, his good humor never failing him, not even in his sleep, with which he generally favors the company once or twice in an evening. But even then, there is a benevolence in his countenance, that beams more intensely than when he is awake. I have seen him fall asleep in the blue parlor at Ambrose's, with North in the chair, and myself as croupier. Honest Ainslie!

I have no doubt but scholarcraft may be caught as a Scotsman catches the itch,—by friction. How else can you account for it, that born blockheads, by mere dint of *handling* books, grow so wise that even they themselves are equally convinced of and surprised at their own parts? I once carried this philosophy to that degree that in a knot of country folks who had a library amongst them, and who, to the honor of their good sense, made me factotum in the business; one of our members—a little, wise-looking, squat, upright, jabbering body of a tailor—I advised him, instead of turning over the leaves, *to bind the book on his back*.—Johnnie took the hint; and as our meetings were every fourth Saturday, and Pricklouse having a good Scots mile to walk in coming, and of course another in returning, Bodkin was sure to lay his hand on some heavy quarto or ponderous folio, with, and under which, wrapt up in his grey plaid, he grew wise as he grew weary, all the way home. He carried this so far, that an old musty Hebrew concordance, which we had a present of from a neighboring priest, by mere dint of applying it, as doctors do a blistering plaster, between his shoulders, Stitch, in a dozen pilgrimages, acquired as much rational theology as the said priest had done by forty years' perusal of the pages.

Tell me, and tell me truly, what you think of this theory! Yours,
SPUNKIE.

At Whitsunday 1793, after a residence of eighteen months in the house before described, the poet with his family removed to a small self-contained abode of two floors with an attic flat, in the Mill Vennel, now called Burns Street. Ascending three steps to the front door, we find in the lower story a kitchen and parlor, the latter, a fine commodious room; and in the

that is a constitutional failing which he cannot help; for a man of kinder or better intentions was never born. He is now, alas! the only relic I know of the real intimate acquaintances of Burns." Ainslie survived to 1838.

floor above are two rooms of unequal size, the smaller one being that in which the poet breathed his last. Above all are two attic bedrooms where the children slept, and between these a closet, nine feet square, which the bard used as a study, or private retiring place. "It is just possible," wrote Robert Chambers, "that by the time the house came to be occupied, the cheerful views under which it had been taken were somewhat overcast; for the first few months of the war had intervened, producing a general difficulty throughout the nation."

So far as now appears, the first lyric suggested to Burns in the little *sanctum sanctorum* we have just described, was a song dedicated to the charms of Miss Lesley Baillie, of whom he had lately said—

"To see her is to love her, and love but her for ever;
For Nature made her what she is, and never made anither."

He now addressed to her the following letter enclosing the new song referred to.

(1) TO MISS LESLEY BAILLIE, OF MAYFIELD.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

[DUMFRIES, *end of May*, 1793.]

MADAM,—I have just put the last hand to the enclosed song, and I think that I may say of it, as Nature can say of you—"There is a work of mine, finished in my very finest style."

Among your sighing swains, if there should be one whose ardent sentiment and ingenuous modesty fetter his power of speech in your presence; with that look and attitude so native to your manner, and of all others the most bewitching—beauty listening to compassion—put my ballad in the poor fellow's hand, just to give a little breathing to the fervor of his soul.*

I have some pretence, Madam, to make you up the

* Marriage, June 1799.—"At Mayville, Robert Cumming of Logie, Esq., to Miss Lesley Baillie, daughter of Robert Baillie of Mayfield, Esq."—*Scots Mag.*

theme of my song, as you and I are two downright singularities in human nature. You will probably start at this assertion ; but I believe it will be allowed that a woman exquisitely charming, without the least seeming consciousness of it, and a poet who never paid a compliment but where it was justly due, are two of the greatest rarities on earth. I have the honor to be, &c.,

R. B.

SONG,—*Tune*—"The Quaker's Wife."

Blythe hae I been on yon hill,
As the lambs before me;
Careless ilka thought and free
As the breeze blew o'er me, &c.

(See page 163, *supra*.)

On 25th June 1793 our poet wrote to George Thomson, enclosing a new song to the tune of "Logan Braes," in which occurs this indignant stanza,

"Oh wae be to you, Men o' state,
That brethren rouse to deadly hate!
As ye make mony a fond heart mourn,
Sae may it on your heads return!"

See Thomson Correspondence, Vol. V.

(¹) TO MISS M'MURDO, DRUMLANRIG,

ENCLOSING A BALLAD I HAD COMPOSED ON HER.

(DOUGLASS, 1877.)

DUMFRIES, *July* 1793.

MADAM,—Amid the profusion of compliments and addresses which your age, sex, and accomplishments will now bring you, permit me to approach with my *devoirs*, which, however deficient may be their consequence in other respects, have the double novelty and merit, in these frivolous, hollow times, of being poetic and sincere. In the inclosed ballad I have, I think, hit off a few outlines of your portrait. The personal charms, the purity of mind, the ingenious *naïveté* of

heart and manners in my heroine are, I flatter myself, a pretty just likeness of Miss M'Murdo in a cottage. Every composition of this kind must have a series of dramatic incidents in it, so I have had recourse to my invention to finish the rest of my ballad.

So much from the poet. Now let me add a few wishes which every man who has himself the honor of being a father must breathe when he sees female youth, beauty, and innocence about to enter into this chequered, and very precarious world. May you, my young Madam, escape that frivolity which threatens universally to pervade the minds and manners of fashionable life, though it may pass by the rougher and more degenerate sex. The mob of fashionable female youth, what are they? are they anything? They prattle, laugh, sing, dance, finger a lesson, or perhaps turn over the parts of a fashionable novel, but are their minds stored with any information worthy of the noble powers of reason and judgment? or do their hearts glow with sentiment, ardent, generous, or humane? Were I to poetise on the subject, I would call them the butterflies of the human kind, remarkable only for, and distinguished only by, the idle variety of their ordinary glare, sillily straying from one blossoming weed to another, without a meaning and without an aim, the idiot prey of every pirate of the skies who thinks them worth his while as he wings his way by them, and speedily by wintry time swept to that oblivion whence they might as well never have appeared.

Amid this crowd of nothings may you, Madam, be something—may yours be a character dignified; a rational and immortal being.

A still more formidable plague in life—unfeeling, interested selfishness, is a contagion too impure to touch you. The selfish drift to bless yourself alone, to build your fame on another's ruin, to look on the

child of misfortune without commiseration, or even the victim of folly without pity—these, and every other feature of a heart rotten at the core, are what you are totally incapable of.

These wishes, Madam, are of no consequence to you, but to me they are of the utmost, as they give me an opportunity of declaring with what respect I have the honor to be, &c.,*

R. B.

(⁵) TO JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ., DRUMLANRIG.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

[*Dumfries, July 1793.*]

SIR,—There is a beautiful, simple Scots air, which Mr. Clarke tells me has the good fortune to meet your approbation, and which he says he has taught to your young ladies, together with the rudiments of a Song which I intend to suit the tune.† That Ballad I enclose finished and, in my own opinion, in my best style; and I now beg leave to present to Miss M'Murdo the composition, as I think I have made it worthy, in some degree, of the subject. She I, from the beginning, meant for the Heroine of it.

Sincere respect, Sir, even from those who can bestow nothing else, or who are themselves of no consequence as folk of the world—such respect and tribute of the heart is an offering grateful to every mind. You know that it is a tribute I never pay but in the willing ardor of my soul. Kings give Coronets—alas! I can only bestow a Ballad. Still, however, I proud-

* The foregoing rather prosy, moralising letter (as it seems to us under the circumstances) is extracted from the volume of the author's letters collected for Mr. Riddell of Glenriddell. There is nothing of later date contained in that book, although this one ranks number 10 out of 28 examples so recorded. We shall find that at Christmas following the author was still employed in transcribing these letters into the collection.

† Page 167, *supra*.

ly claim one superiority even over Monarchs; my presents, so far as I am a Poet, are the presents of Genius; and as the gifts of R. Burns, they are the gifts of respectful gratitude to the Worthy. I assure you I am not a little flattered with the idea when I anticipate children pointing out in future publications the tributes of respect I have bestowed on their Mothers. The merits of the Scots airs to which many of my Songs are—and more will be—set, give me this pleasing hope.

You I believe are a subscriber to that splendid edition of Scots Music in which Pleyel presides over the musical department. In a future number of that Work (the first number is already published) this Ballad will probably appear. I have the honor to be, Sir, your obliged, humble serv^t.

ROBT. BURNS.

(⁸) TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., WRITER,
MAUCHLINE?

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

DUMFRIES, 16th July 1793.

MY DEAR SIR,—I understand that our friend, Mrs. Muir, of Tarbolton Mill, is likely to be involved in great difficulties as to the Settlement the late Miller made.† Will you be so obliging as to let me know the state of the case; and if you think it would answer any good purpose to advocate the cause to Edinburgh at once, I can answer for her—a Writer to the Signet, an intimate friend of mine, will cheerfully undertake the business, without a single sixpence of fees; and our countryman, David Cathcart, lies under

* The original MS., which wants the address (here supplied from conjecture) is in Detroit. We print from a copy in the "Scottish American Journal."

† This was Wm. Muir whose Epitaph is printed at page 59, Vol. I., and who occupied the "Willie's Mill" of "Death and Dr. Hornbock."

promise to me to advocate at small expense whenever I represent female poverty in distress. I am much interested for her, and will, as far as I have interest in either, move heaven and earth in her behalf. My interest in the first is vastly improved since you and I were first acquainted. Oh, there is nothing like matrimony for setting a man's face Zionward; whether it be that it sublimates a man above the visible diurnal sphere, or whether it tires him of this sublunary state, or whether the delicious morsel of happiness which he enjoys in the conjugal yoke gives him a longing for the feasts above, or whether a poor husband thinks he has every chance in his favor, as, should he go to hell, he can be no worse—I shall leave to a weel-waled Presbytery of orthodox Ayrshire priests to determine.—Yours most sincerely,

ROBT. BURNS.

In July of this year, Mr. George Thomson, published the first half volume of his *Select Scottish Melodies*, containing five of the songs written by Burns for that work. On receiving a copy of it, the poet thus wrote to the musical editor:—"Allow me to congratulate you now as a brother of the quill. You have committed your character and fame, which will be tried for ages to come by the illustrious jury of the Sons and Daughters of Taste—all whom poesy can please, or music charm. Being a bard of Nature, I have some pretensions to second-sight; and I am warranted by the spirit to foretell and affirm, that your great-great-grandchild will hold up your volumes, and say with honest pride:—"This so-much-admired selection was the work of my ancestor!"*"

It was at this time that Burns, under the influence of a morbid sentiment of independence, wrote in angry terms to Thomson for having presumed to remit him five pounds, "as a small mark of gratitude." "Your pecuniary parcel," he thus wrote, "degrades me in my own eyes; however, to return it would savor of bombast affectation. . . . Burns's

* It is perhaps not universally known that the sons and daughters of the late Charles Dickens are the great-grandchildren of George Thomson.

character for generosity of sentiment and independence of mind will, I trust, long outlive any of his wants which the cold, unfeeling ore can supply; at least I shall take care that such a character he shall deserve." The poet's indignant protestation contrasts strangely with the following fragment of a letter which has been preserved, addressed apparently about this time to

(⁵) JOHN M'MURDO, ESQ., DRUMLANRIG. (?)

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

THIS is a painful, disagreeable letter, and the first of the kind I ever wrote. I am truly in serious distress for three or four guineas; can you, my dear sir, accommodate me? These accursed times, by tripping up importation, have, for this year at least, lopped off a full third of my income; and with my large family this is to me a distressing matter. R. B.

Dr. Currie tells us that "during this time Burns made several excursions into the neighboring country, of one of which through Galloway, an account is preserved in a letter of Mr. Syme, written soon after;" and, as that production gives an animated picture of the poet, by a correct and masterly hand, he gladly recorded it as a valuable portion of the biography of Burns.

(⁶) EXCURSION INTO GALLOWAY WITH MR. SYME.

I got Burns a grey Highland sheltie to ride on. We dined the first day, 27th July 1793, at Glendenwynes of Parton; a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening we walked out and ascended a gentle eminence, from which we had as fine a view of Alpine scenery as can well be imagined. A delightful soft evening showed all its wilder as well as its grander graces. Immediately opposite, and within a mile of us, we saw Airds, a charming romantic place, where dwelt Lowe, the author of "Mary, weep no more for me." This was classic ground for Burns. He viewed the highest

hill, which rises o'er the source of Dee, and would have staid till the "passing spirit" had appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmure that night. We arrived as Mr. and Mrs. Gordon were sitting down to supper.

Here is a genuine baron's seat. The castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat. In front, the Ken winds for several miles through the most fertile and beautiful holm; till it expands into a lake twelve miles long, the banks of which, on the south, present a fine and soft landscape of green knolls, natural wood, and here and there a grey rock. On the north the aspect is great, wild, and, I may say, tremendous. In short, I can scarcely conceive a scene more terribly romantic than the castle of Kenmure. Burns thinks so highly of it, that he meditates a description of it in poetry. Indeed I believe he has begun the work. We spent three days with Mr. Gordon, whose polished hospitality is of an original and endearing kind. Mrs. Gordon's lap-dog "Echo" was dead. She would have an epitaph for him. Several had been made. Burns was asked for one. This was setting Hercules to the distaff. He disliked the subject, but, to please the lady, he would try. Here is what he produced:—

"In wood and wild, ye warbling throng,
Your heavy loss deplore;
Now, half extinct your powers of song—
Sweet Echo is no more.
Ye jarring, screeching things around,
Scream your discordant joys;
Now, half your din of tuneless sound
With Echo silent lies."

We left Kenmure, and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor-road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark. The hollow winds sighed, the lightnings gleamed, the thunder rolled. The poet enjoyed the awful scene—he spoke not a word, but seemed rapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements "rumble their bellyful" upon our defenceless heads. "Oh, oh! 'twas foul." We got utterly wet; and, to revenge ourselves, Burns insisted at Gatehouse, on our getting utterly drunk.

From Gatehouse we went next day to Kirkcudbright, through a fine country. But here I must tell you that Burns had got a pair of "Jemmy" boots for the journey, which had been thoroughly wet, and which had been dried in such a manner,

that it was not possible to get them on again. The brawny poet tried force, and tore them to shreds. A whiffling vexation of this sort is more trying to the temper than a serious calamity. We were going to St. Mary's Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk, and the forlorn Burns was discomfited at the thought of his ruined boots. A sick stomach and a headache lent their aid, and the man of verse was quite *accablé*. I attempted to reason with him. Mercy on us, how he did fume and rage! Nothing could reinstate him in temper. I tried various expedients, and at last hit on one that succeeded. I showed him the house of Garlieston, across the Bay of Wigton. Against the Earl of Galloway with whom he was offended, he expectorated his spleen, and regained a most agreeable temper. He was in a most epigrammatic humor indeed! He afterwards fell on humbler game. There is one Morine whom he does not love. He had a passing blow at him:

"When Morine deceas'd to the devil went down,
'Twas nothing would serve him but Satan's own crown:
Thy fool's head, quoth Satan, that crown shall wear never,
I grant thou'rt as wicked, but not quite so clever."

Well, I am to bring my reader to Kirkcudbright along with our poet without boots. I carried the torn ruins across my saddle in spite of his fulminations, and in contempt of appearances; and what is more, Lord Selkirk carried them in his coach to Dumfries. He insisted they were worth mending.

We reached Kirkcudbright about one o'clock. I had promised that we should dine with one of the first men in our country, John Dalzell.* But Burns was in a wild and obstreperous humor, and swore he would not dine where he should be under the smallest restraint. We prevailed, therefore, on Mr. Dalzell to dine with us in the Inn, and had a very agreeable party. In the evening we set out for St. Mary's Isle. Robert had not absolutely regained the milkiness of good temper, and it occurred once or twice to him, as he rode

* Of Barncroch, near Kirkcudbright. He was on intimate terms with Gordon of Kenmure who once sent him a snuff-mull as a present. The acknowledgment of the gift would have been worthy of Burns:

"Your present I received, and letter,
No compliment could please me better,
EX DONO NO KENMURE I'll put on it,
And crown it wi' a silver bonnet,—
In spite of a' the deils in hell,
Your humble servant, JOHN DALZELL."

along, that St. Mary's Isle was the seat of a Lord ; yet that lord was not an aristocrat, at least in his sense of the word. We arrived about eight o'clock, as the family were at tea and coffee. St. Mary's Isle is one of the most delightful places that can, in my opinion, be formed by the assemblage of every soft, but not tame object, which constitutes natural and cultivated beauty. But not to dwell on its external graces, let me tell you that we found all the ladies of the family (all beautiful) at home, and some strangers ; and among others who but Urbani ! The Italian sung us many Scottish songs, accompanied with instrumental music. The two young ladies of Selkirk sung also. We had the song of " Lord Gregory," which I asked for, to have an opportunity of calling on Burns to recite *his* ballad to that tune. He did recite it ; and such was the effect, that a dead silence ensued. It was such a silence as a mind of feeling naturally preserves when it is touched with that enthusiasm which banishes every other thought but the contemplation and indulgence of the sympathy produced. Burns's " Lord Gregory " is, in my opinion, a most beautiful and affecting ballad. The fastidious critic may perhaps say some of the sentiments and imagery are of too elevated a kind for such a style of composition ; for instance, " Thou bolt of heav'n that flashest by ; " and " Ye mustering thunders from above ; " but this is a cold-blooded objection, which will be *said* rather than *felt*.

We enjoyed a most happy evening at Lord Selkirk's. We had in every sense of the word a feast, in which our minds and our senses were equally gratified. The poet was delighted with his company, and acquitted himself to admiration. The lion that had raged so violently in the morning was now as mild and gentle as a lamb. Next day we returned to Dumfries, and so ends our peregrination.

I told you that in the midst of the storm on the wilds of Kenmure, Burns was rapt in meditation. What do you think he was about ? He was charging the English army along with Bruce, at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner on our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the following address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell.

" Scots ! wha hae wi' Wallace bled," &c.

Dr. Currie gives his readers no clue to discover *for whom* the above lively account was prepared by Syme ; but he says it

was "written soon after" the events which it describes. If so, Syme could not be mistaken as to the date of *Bruce's Address*, as he tells us the poet presented him with a copy, the day after their return from the tour. As a fact, this is contradicted by the letter from Burns to George Thomson, of 1st September thereafter, which distinctly says that he conceived that famous Ode during his evening walk on the preceding day. Currie must have felt the awkwardness of Syme's dilemma there; for, in tenderness to the living, he altered the words of the dead, so as to leave the date indefinite in his printed copy of the poet's letter. Instead of the genuine words—"This thought, in my yesternight's evening-walk, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm," he set down the passage thus:—"This thought, in my solitary wanderings, warmed me," &c.

On the 30th day of the same month in which Burns composed *Bruce's Address* at Bannockburn, he presented, along with three other books, to the Dumfries Subscription Library, "*Delolme on the British Constitution*," on which he had inscribed the words: "Mr. Burns presents this book to the Library, and begs they will take it as a creed of British liberty—until they find a better.—R. B."

(¹) TO CAPTAIN MILLER, DALSWINTON,

WITH BRUCE'S ADDRESS AT BANNOCKBURN.

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

[DUMFRIES, 1793.]

DEAR SIR,—The following Ode is on a subject which I know you by no means regard with indifference.

"O Liberty,
Thou mak'st the gloomy face of Nature gay,
Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day."

It does me so much good to meet with a man whose honest bosom glows with the generous enthusiasm, the heroic daring of liberty, that I could not forbear sending you a composition of my own on the subject, which I really think is in my best manner. I have the honor to be, dear Sir, &c.,

ROBT. BURNS.

The new edition of the author's poems in two volumes, which appeared in the preceding February, had taken so well with the public that the number printed was nearly exhausted, and Mr. Creech had again applied to Burns on the subject of a fresh edition. He took some pains to correct the sheets, and introduced several alterations in the text, especially in the "Twa Dogs," the "Earnest Cry and Prayer," and "Death and Doctor Hornbook." The word "Poet" was substituted for "Bardie," which occurred in several of the pieces, and a few other trivial alterations were made; but no new pieces were added. It was by many supposed that those alterations—some of them no improvements—were made, or at least suggested by, Mr. A. Fraser Tytler; but we were recently shewn the "printer's copy" of volume first, in which the emendations referred to are inserted in a copy of the edition of 1793, in the bard's own hand. That relic, which once belonged to Archibald Constable the publisher, is now possessed by Captain Colin Mackenzie, London.

(7) MR. JAMES JOHNSON, ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

[DUMFRIES, *Oct.*, 1793.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I [have not lately had an opportunity] of writing to you : your songs much [occupy my thoughts, but I am worried by un]avoidable hurry. I am [now busy] correcting a new edition [of my poems, and] this, with my ordinary [business, finds me] in full employment.

[At your leisure, if you] choose, get somebody to class the first lines of the songs alphabetically, and I will draw out an Index of Author's names, as soon as you send the list, and return [corrected proofs of the songs.]

* The original document is a patched and pasted fragment—part of the Hastie collection, in the British Museum. The short insertions within brackets are here put in by conjecture to supply words eaten away from the manuscript. The longer passage at the end within brackets, is supplied from Cromek who printed it as a portion of another letter to Johnson, of later date; as he failed to decypher the present one, which had evidently been in his hands.

A valued musical acquaintance of [mine in the neighborhood] of Ayr is thinking [of publishing a] Collection of Strathspeys and Reels. [I have recommended him to you in this matter. Engage with him on the] same terms as you would another; but as you will be promptly paid, let him have your lowest terms. Write to me as to this matter in a post or two at farthest.

As to our Musical Museum, I have better than a dozen songs by me for the fifth volume. Send with Mr. Clarke when he comes to you, [whatever new airs you have] got. If we cannot finish the fifth volume any other way, what would you think of Scotch words to some beautiful Irish airs? In the meantime, at your leisure, give a copy of the Museum to my worthy friend, Mr. Peter Hill, Bookseller, to bind for me interleaved with blank leaves, exactly as he did the Laird of Glenriddell's, that I [may insert every anecdote I can learn, together with my own criticisms and remarks on the songs. A copy of this kind I shall leave with you, the editor, to publish at some after period, by way of making the Museum a book famous to the end of time, and you renowned for ever. In haste, yours,

R. B.]

(⁸) TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, EDINBURGH.

(DR. WADDELL'S ED. in part, DOUGLAS, 1877, completed.)*

[DUMFRIES, Oct. 1793.]

I WAS much obliged to you, my dear Friend, for making me acquainted with Gow.† He is a modest, intelligent, worthy fellow; besides his being a man of

* We have collated this note with the poet's holograph in the British Museum, and inserted the passages missing in former printed copies.

† This is supposed to have been a brother of Neil Gow.

great genius in his way. I have spent many happy hours with him, in the short while he has been here.

Why did you not send me those tunes and verses that Clarke and you cannot make out? Let me have them as soon as possible, that while he is at hand, I may settle the matter with him. He and I have been very busy providing and laying out materials for your fifth volume. I have got about a dozen by me. If you can conveniently, let me have half a dozen copies of your fourth volume: I want no more. As soon as the bound copy of all the volumes is ready, take the trouble of forwarding it. In haste, yours ever,

R. B.

(7) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

Nov. 1793.

I WILL wait on you, my ever-valued friend, but whether in the morning I am not sure. Sunday closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen until noon. Fine employment for a poet's pen! There is a species of the human genus that I call the *gin-horse class*: what enviable dogs they are! Round, and round, and round they go—Mundell's ox that drives his cotton-mill is their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a d-mnd melange of fretfulness and melancholy; not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement, like a wild finch, caught amid the horrors of winter, and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded that it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied, when he

foretold—"And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper!" If my resentment is awaked, it is sure to be where it dare not squeak; and if— * *

Pray that Wisdom and Bliss be more frequent visitors of
R. B.

(⁸) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

[*November, 1793.*]

DEAR MADAM, I meant to have called on you yesternight, but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view, was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon, guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my weather-beaten rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday; when we may arrange the business of the visit.

* * * * *

Among the profusion of idle compliments, which insidious craft, or unmeaning folly, incessantly offer at your shrine—a shrine, how far exalted above such adoration—permit me, were it but for rarity's sake, to pay you the honest tribute of a warm heart and an independent mind; and to assure you, that I am, thou most amiable and most accomplished of thy sex, with the most respectful esteem, and fervent regard, thine,
&c.,
R. B.

(²) TO MISS FONTENELLE, DUMFRIES
THEATRE.

WITH A PROLOGUE FOR HER BENEFIT NIGHT.
WEDNESDAY, 4TH DECR.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

Enclosed is the Address, such as it is, and may it be a prologue to an overflowing house. If all the town put together have half the ardor for your success and welfare of my individual wishes, my prayer will most certainly be granted. R. B.

[*2nd. Dec. 1793.*]

Still anxious to secure your partial favor,
And not less anxious sure this night than ever.

See p. 194, supra.

(¹) TO CAPTAIN ———*

ENCLOSING "BRUCE'S ADDRESS AT BANNOCKBURN."

(CUNNINGHAM, 1834.)

DUMFRIES, *5th December, 1793.*

SIR, heated as I was with wine yesternight, I was perhaps rather seemingly impertinent in my anxious wish to be honored with your acquaintance. You will forgive it—it was the impulse of heart-felt respect. "He is the father of Scottish county reform, and is a man who does honor to the business, at the same time the business does honor to him," said my worthy friend Glenriddel to somebody by me, who was talking of your coming to this country with your

* Chambers has suggested the name "Capt. Robertson of Lude" as the person here addressed: but that gentleman was "Major Robertson," see letter to Cunningham, 3rd March 1794.

corps. "Then," I said, "I have a woman's longing to take him by the hand, and say to him, 'Sir, I honor you as a man to whom the interests of humanity are dear, and as a patriot to whom the rights of your country are sacred.'"

In times like these, Sir, when our commoners are barely able by the glimmering of their own twilight understandings to scrawl a frank, and when lords are what gentlemen would be ashamed to be, to whom shall a sinking country call for help? To the independent country gentleman. To him who has too deep a stake in his country not to be in earnest for her welfare; and who, in the honest pride of man, can view with equal contempt the insolence of office and the allurements of corruption.

I mentioned to you a Scots ode or song I had lately composed, and which, I think, has some merit. Allow me to enclose it. When I fall in with you at the theatre, I shall be glad to have your opinion of it. Accept of it, Sir, as a very humble but most sincere tribute of respect from a man who, dear as he prizes poetic fame, yet holds dearer an independent mind. I have the honor to be, &c., R. B.

Mrs. Riddell returned to Woodley Park in October, after an absence of several months in London, where her husband left her while he proceeded to the West Indies to look after his affairs there. In a letter which she wrote to Mr. Smellie the printer, in November 1793, she said:—"Here am I, as chaste and domestic, but perhaps not quite so industrious, as Penelope in the absence of her hero. I resemble rather 'the lilies of the field, which toil not, neither do they spin'; but I read, I write, I sing, and contrive to wile away the time, as pleasantly as any sociable being like myself can do in a state of solitude, and in some measure, of mortification. . . . I shall write you more fully in my next, as to the nature of my present pursuits, and how I found Burns and the other friends here you left behind, for they were not few I assure you."* Mrs.

* Memoirs of William Smellie, by Robt. Kerr.

Riddell, however, had the Dumfries Theatre and other attractions in her neighborhood, every way calculated to yield her some consolation until the Christmas season arrived and brought home Mr. Riddell; and again at Woodley Park

"'Twas merry in the hall, when the beards wagg'd all," &c.

Mr. Creech's printer was about this time ready to throw off the sheets of the last edition of our author's poems, which he lived to see published, viz, that of 1794, in two volumes. A letter to Mr. Fraser Tytler, refers to that matter.

(2) TO ALEXANDER FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.,
EDINBURGH.

(DR. WADDELL'S ED., 1869.)

SIR, a poor caitiff, driving as I am at this moment with an excise quill, at the rate of "Devil take the hindmost," is ill qualified to round the period of gratitude, or swell the pathos of sensibility. Gratitude, like some other amiable qualities of the mind, is now-a-days so abused by impostors, that I have sometimes wished that the project of that sly dog Momus, I think it is, had gone into effect—planting a window in the breast of man. In that case, when a poor fellow comes, as I do at this moment, before his benefactor, tongue-tied with the sense of these very obligations, he would have nothing to do but place himself in front of his friend, and lay bare the workings of his bosom.

I again trouble you with another, and my last, parcel of manuscript. I am not interested in any of these; blot them at your pleasure. I am much indebted to you for taking the trouble of correcting the press work. One instance, indeed, may be rather unlucky; if the lines to Sir John Whitefoord are printed: they ought to end—

"And tread the *shadowy* path to that dark world unknown."

“shadowy,” instead of “dreary,” as I believe it stands at present.* I wish this could be noticed in the Errata. This comes of writing, as I generally do, from the memory.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your deeply indebted
humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

6th Decr., 1793.

(7) TO JOHN M‘MURDO, ESQ., DUMFRIES.

WITH A PARCEL.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

December 1793.

SIR,—It is said that we take the greatest liberties with our greatest friends, and I pay myself a very high compliment in the manner in which I am going to apply the remark. I have owed you money longer than ever I owed it to any man. Here is Ker’s account, and here are six guineas; and now I don’t owe a shilling to man—or woman either. But for these damned dirty dog’s ear’d little pages, I had done myself the honor to have waited on you long ago. Independent of the obligations your hospitality has laid me under; the consciousness of your superiority in the rank of man and gentleman, of itself was fully as much as I could ever make head against; but to owe you money too, was more than I could face.

I think I once mentioned something of a collection of Scots songs I have for some years been making: I send you a perusal of what I have got together. I could not conveniently spare them above five or six

* By some overlook or fatality this nice little correction was not attended to; and the line remained as it was until of very recent date, when Dr. Carruthers of Inverness published the present letter, which Colonel Fraser Tytler of Aldourie, had exhibited to him. The date in the MS. is “1795,” and upon our representing to Dr. Carruthers the *unlikelihood* of that date, he examined the manuscript again and satisfied himself that the date is not in the poet’s handwriting; but a conjectural one by some other hand.

days, and five or six glances of them will probably more than suffice you. A very few of them are my own. When you are tired of them, please leave them with Mr. Clint, of the King's Arms. There is not another copy of the collection in the world; and I should be sorry that any unfortunate negligence should deprive me of what has cost me a good deal of pains.

R. B.

Mr. M'Murdo seems to have been the patron to whom Burns applied during the past summer for a small loan; and it now appears that having paid an account of Mr. Ker's against that gentleman, he was here clearing off his own debt by enclosing Mr. Ker's discharge, along with six guineas of balance required to make up the whole personal obligation. The poet here congratulates himself on being now free of pecuniary debt; but the reader will hereafter find that he had involved himself in a like obligation to his landlord, Captain John Hamilton, in shape of arrears of house-rent, which was not entirely liquidated when he died.*

The "Collection of Scots Songs," referred to in the after part of the letter, was one which our bard had been at the pains to gather and transcribe into a book "for the use of the Crochallan Fencibles." "Unluckily (says Chambers) Burns's collection of these facetiæ, including his own essays in the same walk, fell after his death into the hands of one of those publishers who would sacrifice the highest interests of humanity to put an additional penny into their own purses; and to the lasting grief of all friends of our poet, they were allowed the honors of the press. The mean-looking volume which resulted (under the title of 'The Merry Muses of Caledonia'), should be a warning to all honorable men of letters against the slightest connexion with clandestine literature, much more the degradation of contributing to it."

That considerate editor at same time admits that Burns was induced to collect and imitate those indecorous songs and ballads "apparently for no other object than that of amusing his merry companions in their moments of conviviality;" and he pleads that he must have been led into this taste "by his enthusiastic reverence for all forms of his country's elder Muse; for, with a strange contradiction to the grave and religious

* See letter to Hamilton, July, 1794.

character of the Scottish people, they possess a wonderful quantity of that kind of literature. Not (still pleads Chambers) that it is of an inflammatory character, but simply expressive of a profound sense of the ludicrous in connection with the sexual affections."

We have seen many of our poet's holograph copies of his own performances in that way, and they seem to have been transmitted to his Edinburgh fellows of the social club referred to, by the hands of Robert Cleghorn, farmer, Saughton Mills, to whom they are generally found to be addressed. These effusions were sometimes accompanied by prose communications of which the following may be given as a sample.

(⁶) TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

I HAVE just bought a quire of post, and I am determined, my dear Cleghorn, to give you the maiden-head of it. Indeed that is all my reason for, and all that I can propose to give you by, this present scrawl. From my late hours last night, and the dripping fogs and damn'd east-wind of this stupid day, I have left me as little soul as an oyster—"Sir John, you are so fretful, you cannot live long"—"Why, there is it! Come, sing me a b—dy song to make me merry!!"

ACT SEDERUNT O' THE SESSION.

Tune.—"O'er the muir among the heather."

* * * * *

Well, the Law is good for something, since we can make a b—dy song out of it. (*N. B.*—I never made anything of it any other way.) There is—there must be some truth in original sin. My violent propensity to b—dy convinces me of it. Lack a day! if that species of composition be the special sin, never-to-be-forgiven in this world nor in that which is to come, "I am the most offending soul alive." Mair for token, a fine chiel—a hand-waled friend and crony o'

my ain, gat o'er the lugs in love wi' a braw, bonie,
fodgel hizzie frae the English side, weel-ken'd i' the
burgh of Annan by the name o' "Bonie Mary;" and
I tauld the tale as follows: (*N. B.*—The chorus is
auld.)

COME COWE ME, MINNIE, COME COWE ME.

Tune.—"My minnie's ay glowerin o'er me."

* * * * *

Forgive this wicked scrawl. Thine in all the sin-
cerity of a brace of honest Port. R. B.

Oct. 25th 1793.

THE PATRIARCH—A WICKED SONG,

AUTHOR'S NAME UNKNOWN.*

(CHAMBERS, 1852.)

Tune.—"The Waukin o' a winter's night."

THE PUBLISHER TO THE READER.—Courteous
Reader,—The following is certainly the production of
one of those licentious, ungodly (too-much-abounding
in this our day) wretches, who take it as a compli-
ment to be called wicked, provided you allow them
to be witty. Pity it is that while so many tar-bar-
rels in the country are empty, and so many gibbets
untenanted, some example is not made of these profligates!

* * * * *

* Chambers, who first printed this heading in 1852, records that the poet's MS. was then possessed by the Town Clerk of Forfar.

(7) TO MR. ROBERT CLEGHORN, SAUGHTON MILLS.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

My best compliments to Mrs. Cleghorn, and all your friends of my acquaintance. Many happy returns of the season to you, my worthy Sir, and (pardon me) your fully as worthy bedfellow. The foregoing poem is for her. For you, I make a present of the following new edition of an old Cloaciniad song, a species of composition which I have heard you admire, and a kind of song which I knew you wanted much. It is sung to an old tune, something like "Tak your ould cloak about ye."

There was twa wives, and twa witty wives,
Sat o'er a stowp o' brandy, &c., &c.

* * * * *

God speed the plough, and send a good seed time !
Amen ! Farewell !

ROBT. BURNS.

The reader may recollect of a letter by Lord Byron, dated 14th Dec. 1813, addressed to his friend Hodgson, in which he writes of some of Burns's manuscript letters thus :—"Will you tell Drury I have a treasure for him—a whole set of original Burns letters never published, nor to be published ; for they are full of fearful oaths, and the most nauseous songs—all humorous, but coarse bawdry. However they are curiosities and shew him quite in a new point of view—the mixture, or rather contrast of tenderness, delicacy, obscenity, and coarseness in the same mind is wonderful." We suspect that Byron has not characterized those manuscripts quite correctly in every particular ; for we never found "fearful oaths" in any of our poet's writings, and not one, even of his *wickedest* songs, can truly be termed "nauseous."

(38) TO MRS. DUNLOP OF DUNLOP.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 15th Dec. 1793.

MY DEAR FRIEND.—As I am in a complete Decemberish humor, gloomy, sullen, stupid, as even the deity of Dulness herself could wish, I shall not drawl out a heavy letter with a number of heavier apologies for my late silence. Only one I shall mention, because I know you will sympathise in it: these four months, a sweet little girl, my youngest child, has been so ill, that every day, a week or less threatened to terminate her existence.* There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the state of husband and father, for God knows they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours these ties have frequently given me. I see a train of helpless little folk; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate; even in all the vigor of manhood as I am, such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock! 'Tis here I envy your people of fortune. A father on his death-bed, taking an everlasting leave of his children, has indeed woe enough; but the man of competent fortune leaves his sons and daughters independency and friends; while I—but I shall run distracted if I think any longer on the subject!

To leave off talking of the matter so gravely, I shall sing with the old Scots ballad:—

* This was Elizabeth Riddell Burns, whose birth is announced at page 313, *supra*. She appears to have been from the first, a delicate infant, and at this date was the poet's youngest child; "James Glencairn" followed in August 1794, and Elizabeth was sent to be nursed by the Armours at Mauchline, where she died in Autumn 1795.

“O that I had ne’er been married,
 I would never had nae care;
 Now, I’ve gotten a wife and weans,
 And they cry ‘crowdie’ evermair
 Crowdie ance, crowdie twice,
 Crowdie three times in a day;
 An’ ye crowdie ony mair
 Ye’ll crowdie a’ my meal away.”

December 24th.

We have had a brilliant theatre here this season; only, as all other business has, it experiences a stagnation of trade from the epidemical complaint of the country—want of cash. I mention our theatre merely to lug in an occasional “Address” which I wrote for the benefit night of one of the actresses, which is as follows:—

ADDRESS SPOKEN BY MISS FONTENELLE ON HER
 BENEFIT NIGHT.

Wednesday December 4th, 1793, at the Theatre Dumfries.*

“Still anxious to secure your partial favor,
 And not less anxious, sure this night than ever,” &c.

See page 194, supra.

25th, Christmas Morning.

This, my much loved friend, is a morning of wishes: accept mine—so Heaven hear me, as they are sincere! that blessings may attend your steps, and affliction know you not! In the charming words of my favorite author, *The Man of Feeling*, “May the great spirit bear up the weight of the grey hairs: and blunt the arrow that brings them rest!”

Now that I talk of authors, how do you like Cow-

* Currie, who dates this letter 1795, has set down the date of this “benefit night” as having been “December 4th, 1795,” and his mistake has been hitherto followed by every editor of Burns. The internal evidence, however, for 1793 is too strong to be controverted.

per? Is not the *Task* a glorious poem? The religion of the *Task*, bating a few scraps of Calvinistic divinity, is the religion of God and Nature: the religion that exalts, that ennobles man. Were not you to send me your *Zeluco* in return for mine? Tell me how you like my marks and notes through the book. I would not give a farthing for a book, unless I were at liberty to blot it with my criticisms.*

I have lately collected, for a friend's perusal, all my letters: I mean those which I first sketched, in a rough draught, and afterwards wrote out fair. On looking over some old musty papers, which from time to time I had parcelled by, as trash that was scarce worth preserving, and which yet at the same time I did not care to destroy; I discovered many of these rude sketches, and have written, and am writing them out, in a bound MS. for my friend's library. As I wrote always to you the rhapsody of the moment, I cannot find a single scroll to you, except one, about the commencement of our acquaintance. If there were any possible conveyance, I would send you a perusal of my book.

R. B.

The crowning evidence to prove Dr. Currie's mis-date of the foregoing letter lies in the closing paragraph where the poet refers to the Glenriddell manuscript book of letters. It may be suggested that this is only another instance of several fragments of the poet's correspondence being, in absence of full dates, conjecturally thrown together in the process of arranging the chronology of the letters; but it will be found that the text of each of the three divisions renders Dr. Currie's date an impossible one. In December 1795, the little girl whose ill health the writer deploras in the first portion of his letter, had been four months dead; and he himself was just getting into a convalescent state after being nearly brought by disease to the gates of death. At such a time, he could not have spoken of himself as being then "in all the vigor of manhood;"

* At page 239, *supra*, we have referred to this copy of *Zeluco*, now in the hands of Mrs. Dunlop's representatives.

neither can we conceive of him at that time writing thus:—"We had a brilliant theatre here this season." In 1793, however, that announcement, with its qualifying context, has its full meaning reflected from his other correspondence of that year.

A.D. 1794.

To Burns, this year opened as the previous one had closed, in a quiet, routine manner; but a short while elapsed when it was manifest that he had even more occasion now than at any previous New Year season to be on his guard against the social temptations to which he was so prone to yield. Just one year ago, he stated his position thus:—"Of exercise in the way of my business I have enough; but occasional hard-drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned; but it is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of the country that do me the mischief." Probably it was of this period of the Bard's life that a lady in London (Mrs. Basil Montague, we think it was), told the characteristic anecdote to Bloomfield the poet, which Cromek recorded. She having ventured to remonstrate with Burns regarding his danger from social drinking, he replied, "Madam, they would not thank me for my company if I did not drink with them. I must give them a slice of my constitution!" Bloomfield, in giving the anecdote to Lord Buchan, remarked with true feeling—"How much is it to be regretted that he did not give them thinner slices of his constitution!"

(¹¹) TO ROBERT GRAHAM, ESQ., OF FINTRY.

(CHAMBERS, 1856.)

DUMFRIES, Jan. 1794.

SIR,—I am going to venture on a subject which, I am afraid, may appear, *from me*, improper; but as I do it from the best of motives, if you should not approve of my ideas, you will forgive them.

Economy of the public monies is, I know, highly the wish of your honorable board ; and any hint conducive thereto which may occur to any, though the meanest individual in your service, it is surely his duty to communicate it.

I have been myself accustomed to labor, and have no notion that a servant of the public should eat the bread of idleness ; so, what I have long digested, and am going to propose, is the reduction of one of our Dumfries divisions. Not only in these unlucky times, but even in the highest flush of business, my division, though by far the heaviest, was mere trifling—the others, still less. I would plan the reduction as thus : Let the second division be annihilated, and be divided among the others. The duties in it are, two chandlers, a common brewer, and some victuallers ; these, with some tea and spirit stocks, are the whole division. The two chandlers I would give to the third or tobacco division ; it is the idlest of us all. That I may seem impartial, I shall willingly take under my charge the common brewer and the victuallers. The tea and spirit stocks divide between the Bridgend and Dumfries second divisions. They have at present but very little, *comparatively*, to do, and are quite adequate to the task.

I assure you, Sir, that by my plan the duties will be equally well discharged, and thus an officer's appointment saved to the public. You must remark one thing—that our common brewers are, every man of them in Dumfries completely and unexceptionably, fair traders. One or two rascally creatures are in the Bridgend division ; but besides being nearly ruined, as all smugglers deserve, by fines and forfeitures, their business is on the most trifling scale you can fancy.

I must beg of you, Sir, should my plan please you, that you will conceal my hand in it, and give it as your own thought. My warm and worthy friend, Mr.

Corbet, may think me an impertinent intermeddler in his department; and Mr. Findlater, my supervisor, who is not only one of the first, if not the very first, of excisemen in your service, but is also one of the worthiest fellows in the universe; he, I know, would feel hurt at it, and as he is one of my most intimate friends, you can easily figure how it would place me to have my plan known to him.

For further information on the subject, permit me to refer you to a young beginner whom you lately sent among us—Mr. Andrew Pearson, a gentleman that I am happy to say, from manner, abilities, and attention, promises, indeed, to be a great acquisition to the service of your honorable board.

This is a letter of business; in a future opportunity I may, and most certainly will, trouble you with one in my own way, *à la Parnasse*.

I have the honor to be, Sir, your much indebted and ever grateful servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

P.S.—I forgot to mention that, if my plan takes, let me recommend to your humanity and justice the present officer of the second division.* He is a very good officer, and is burdened with a family of small children, which, with some debts of early days, crush him much to the ground.

R. B.

(³) TO THE EARL OF BUCHAN.

WITH A COPY OF BRUCE'S ADDRESS AT BANNOCKBURN.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, 12th Jan. 1794.

MY LORD,—Will your Lordship allow me to present you with the inclosed little composition of mine,

* John M'Quaker, 43 years of age, 7 of a family, 13 years in the service, 5 years in present district.—R. B.



Burns and Gavin Hamilton.

AT POOSIE-NANSIE'S.

as a small tribute of gratitude for that acquaintance with which you have been pleased to honor me. Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with any thing in history which interests my feelings as a man, equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel but able usurper leading on the finest army in Europe, to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly daring, and greatly injured, people : on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country or perish with her.

Liberty ! thou art a prize truly, and indeed invaluable ; for never canst thou be too dearly bought !

If my little ode has the honor of your Lordship's approbation, it will gratify my highest ambition.—I have honor to be, &c.,

R. B.

The original MS. of the foregoing letter, with its precious enclosure, is said to have been borrowed from the Earl by Mr. Cromeck, while he was in Edinburgh gathering materials for his "Reliques of Burns." That editor has been traditionally charged with a propensity to delay the return of manuscripts entrusted to him for publication ; and the following letter addressed to him by the Earl (which has recently fallen into our hands) gives some countenance to that tradition.

THE EARL OF BUCHAN TO MR. R. H. CROMEK.

(DOUGLAS, 1877.)

EDINBURGH, 23d Feb. 1809.

SIR,—Mr. Brooks, whom I have just seen, is surprised at your negligence in neither returning the drawing of "Nanse Tinnock,"* which he gave you on loan, nor sending him a

* It is probable that the Earl had purchased a drawing of considerable merit, by an anonymous artist, representing Nanse entering her little parlor with "a tappet hen" in one hand, and "girdle cakes weel-toasted brown" in the other. With characteristic Scotch expression in her face, she seems on the point of dropping a curtsy to her guests, of whom the only two visible are Burns and a douce-like elderly rustic, with whom he conducts an animated discourse over a half-mutchkin stoup, while a newspaper is spread before him, and his collie

copy of your fifth volume of Burns. I am equally surprised at your not availing yourself of the original letter from Burns to me, enclosing the Address of Bruce to his Troops at the Battle of Bannockburn, to have a Fac-simile thereof, as you promised while you were in Edinburgh.

By such conduct you must necessarily sink in the estimation of the public, and I am heartily sorry for it. You will therefore without delay return to me, through your Bookseller, the drawing of Nause Tinnock, and the above-mentioned letter.

BUCHAN.

(ⁱ) TO MR. SAMUEL CLARK, JUN^R., DUM-
FRIES.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

SUNDAY MORNING, [January 1794].

DEAR SIR,—I was, I know, drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Captain Dods made use of to me, had I had nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manners of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I am still pleased to think that I did not ruin the peace and welfare of a wife and family in a drunken squabble. Further, you know that the report of certain political opinions being mine, has already once brought me to the brink of destruction. I dread last night's business may be misrepresented in the same way. You, I beg, will

crouches at his feet. That drawing was well engraved, and published in 1805, as the frontispiece to a thin 8vo volume, entitled "Views in North Britain, illustrative of the Works of Robert Burns," by James Storer and John Greig, engravers, London. A reduced copy of this engraving was given in Hogg and Motherwell's edition of Burns's works in 1835. The portrait of Nause in the print has every appearance of having been taken from the life, while that of Burns is unmistakeably derived from Nasmyth's head. It may be that Lord Buchan had acquired the artist's original life-study of Nause, from which the finished picture was formed.

take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for Mrs. Burns's welfare with the task of waiting, as soon as possible, on every gentleman who was present, and state this to him, and, as you please, shew him this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast? "May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause,"—a toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to. I request and beg that this morning you will wait on the parties present at the foolish dispute. I shall only add that I am truly sorry that a man, who stood so high in my estimation as Mr. Dods, should use me in the manner in which I conceive he has done. R. B.

The gentleman to whom the above letter is addressed was conjunct Commissary Clerk, and Clerk of the Peace for the County of Dumfries, at that time a young man aged twenty-five. For the knowledge of this fact we are indebted to Mr. William M'Dowall's "Memorials of St. Michael's Churchyard, Dumfries." Cromek named him correctly enough; but Chambers altered the Christian name to Stephen, in the belief that Cromek was in error. The letter refers to one of those painful political discussions, into which Burns was frequently led at this period by the vehemence of his own zeal in the cause of Liberty, and by his jealousy of the "lobster-coated puppies," as he termed those of the military profession who offensively paraded their loyalty in his presence.

The next letter in our series is addressed to the same gentleman, who, by the way, died in the prime of life in 1814; it was printed in Dr. Waddell's edition of the correspondence, from the original in possession of Mr. Clark's daughter, Mrs. Stewart Gladstone, of Capenoch, Dumfriesshire.

(²) TO MR. SAMUEL CLARK, JUNIOR, DUMFRIES.

(DR. WADDELL'S ED. 1869.)

MY DEAR SIR,—I recollect something of a drunken promise yesternight to breakfast with you this morning.

I am very sorry that it is impossible. I remember, too, you very obligingly mentioned something of your intimacy with Mr. Corbet, our Supervisor-General. Some of our folks about the Excise Office, Edinburgh, had, and perhaps still have, conceived a prejudice against me as being a drunken, dissipated character. I might be all this, you know, and yet be an honest fellow; but you know that I am an honest fellow, and am nothing of this. You may in your own way, let him know that I am not unworthy of subscribing myself, my dear Clark, your friend,

R. BURNS.

The foregoing letters will prepare the reader for the one which follows, referring to the unhappy results of a saturnalia of intemperance in which the poet mixed one evening at Woodley Park, where he was one of several guests of Mr. Walter Riddell. We have (at page 192, *supra*) stated as circumstantially as it has ever been told, the whole that is really known of the incident which occasioned Burns to write as follows, from the depths of his remorse:—

(^o) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, *January 1794.*

MADAM,—I daresay that this is the first epistle you ever received from the nether world. I write you from the regions of Hell, amid the horrors of the damned. The time and manner of my leaving your earth I do not exactly know; as I took my departure in the heat of a fever of intoxication, contracted at your too hospitable mansion; but on my arrival here, I was fairly tried, and sentenced to endure the purgatorial tortures of this infernal confine, for the space of ninety-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days; and all on account of the impropriety of my conduct yesternight under your roof. Here am I,

laid on a bed of pitiless furze, with my aching head reclining on a pillow of ever-piercing thorn, while an infernal tormenter, wrinkled, and old, and cruel, his name I think is *Recollection*, with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. Still, Madam, if I could in any measure be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle whom my conduct last night so much injured, I think it would be an alleviation to my torments. For this reason I trouble you with this letter. To the men of the company I will make no apology.—Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right to blame me; and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt. But to you, Madam, I have much to apologise. Your Good opinion I valued as one of the greatest acquisitions I had on earth, and I was truly a beast to forfeit it. There was a Miss J—— too, a woman of fine sense, gentle and unassuming manners. Do make, on my part, a miserable, d——d wretch's best apology to her. A Mrs. G——, a charming woman, did me the honor to be prejudiced in my favor; this makes me hope that I have not outraged her beyond all forgiveness. To all the other ladies please present my humblest contrition for my conduct, and my petition for their gracious pardon. O all ye Powers of decency and decorum! whisper to them that my errors, though great, were involuntary—that an intoxicated man is the vilest of beasts—that it was not in my nature to be brutal to any one—that to be rude to a woman, when in my senses, was impossible to me—but

* * * *

Regret! Remorse! Shame! ye three hell-hounds that ever dog my steps and bay at my heels, spare me! spare me!

Forgive the offences, and pity the perdition of,
Madam, your humble slave, ROBT. BURNS.

It is evident from the items of correspondence handed down to us, that the breach betwixt Burns and the Riddells was not at first so wide as it afterwards became through the officious intermeddling of second parties. And even then, not until our poet had exhausted every honorable means of reconciliation did his wounded pride instigate him to resort to the expedient of making Mrs. Riddell and her friends the theme of very ill-natured effusions of his muse. But the most distressing part of this pitiful squabble is that the poet's ancient and most valued friend, Captain Riddell of Glenriddell, was dragged into the *mêlée*, and prevailed on to side with his brother's family against Burns. A few words of temperate explanation might have restored matters to their usual position there; but the opportunity for that had not yet arrived when, in the month of April following, the death of Glenriddell was announced.

The two following letters to Mrs. Riddell seem to have been penned during the earlier stages of the quarrel between her and Burns.

(¹⁰) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 1794.

MADAM,—I return your common-place book. I have perused it with much pleasure, and would have continued my criticisms, but as it seems the critic has forfeited your esteem, his strictures must lose their value.

If it is true that "offences come only from the heart," before you I am guiltless. To admire, esteem, and prize you as the most accomplished of women, and the first of friends—if these are crimes, I am the most offending thing alive.

In a face where I used to meet the kind complacency of friendly confidence, *now* to find cold neglect, and contemptuous scorn, is a wrench that my heart can ill bear. It is, however, some kind of miserable good-luck, that while *de-haut-en-bas* rigor may depress an unoffending wretch to the ground, it has a ten-

dency to rouse a stubborn something in his bosom, which, though it cannot heal the wounds of his soul, is at least an opiate to blunt their poignancy.

With the profoundest respect for your abilities ; the most sincere esteem and ardent regard for your gentle heart and amiable manners ; and the most fervent wish and prayer for your welfare, peace, and bliss, I have the honor to be, Madam, your most devoted humble servant,

ROBT. BURNS.

(II) TO MRS. RIDDELL, WOODLEY PARK.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 1794.

I HAVE this very moment got the Song from Syme, and I am sorry to see that he has spoilt it a good deal. It shall be a lesson to me how I lend him any thing again.

I have sent you *Worter* ; truly happy to have any, the smallest opportunity of obliging you.

'Tis true, Madam, I saw you once since I was at W—— P—— ; and that once froze the very life-blood of my heart. Your reception of me was such, that a wretch meeting the eye of his Judge, about to pronounce sentence of death on him, could only have envied my feelings and situation. But I hate the theme, and never more shall write or speak of it.

One thing I shall proudly say, that I can pay Mrs. R. a higher tribute of esteem, and appreciate her amiable worth more truly than any man whom I have seen approach her ; nor will I yield the *pas* to any man living, in subscribing myself with the sincerest truth, her devoted humble servt.,

R. B.

(12) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE, 1800.)

DUMFRIES, 25th February 1794.

CANST thou minister to a mind diseased? Canst thou speak peace and rest to a soul tossed on a sea of troubles, without one friendly star to guide her course, and dreading that the next surge may overwhelm her? Canst thou give to a frame trembling under the tortures of suspense, the stability and hardihood of the rock that braves the blast? If thou canst not do the least of these, why wouldst thou disturb me in my miseries, with thy enquiries after me?

* * * * *

For these two months I have not been able to lift a pen. My constitution and frame were, *ab origine*, blasted with a deep incurable taint of hypochondria which poisons my existence. Of late, a number of domestic vexations, and some pecuniary share in the ruin of these d—d times; losses which, though trifling, were yet what I could ill-bear, have so irritated me, that my feelings at times could only be envied by a reprobate spirit listening to the sentence that dooms it to perdition.

Are you deep in the language of consolation? I have exhausted in reflection every topic of comfort. *A heart at ease* would have been charmed with my sentiments and reasonings; but as to myself, I was like Judas Iscariot preaching the gospel; he might melt and mould the hearts of those around him, but his own kept its native incorrigibility.

Still there are two pillars that bear us up amid the wreck of misfortune and misery. The ONE is composed of the different modifications of a certain noble,

stubborn something in man, known by the names of courage, fortitude, magnanimity. The OTHER is made up of those feelings and sentiments which, however the sceptic may deny them, or the enthusiast may disfigure them, are yet, I am convinced, original and component parts of the human soul; those *senses of the mind*, if I may be allowed the expression, which connect us with, and link us to, those awful obscure realities—an all powerful and equally beneficent God, and a world to come, beyond death and the grave. The first gives the nerve of combat, while a ray of hope beams on the field; the last pours the balm of comfort into the wounds which time can never cure.

I do not remember, my dear Cunningham, that you and I ever talked on the subject of religion at all. I know some who laugh at it, as the trick of the crafty FEW, to lead the undiscerning MANY; or at most as an uncertain obscurity, which mankind can never know any thing of, and with which they are fools if they give themselves much to do. Nor would I quarrel with a man for his irreligion, any more than I would for his want of a musical ear. I would regret that he was shut out from what, to me and to others were such superlative sources of enjoyment. It is in this point of view, and for this reason, that I will deeply imbue the mind of every child of mine with religion. If my son should happen to be a man of feeling, sentiment, and taste, I shall thus add largely to his enjoyments. Let me flatter myself that this sweet little fellow, who is just now running about my desk, will be a man of a melting, ardent, glowing heart; and an imagination, delighted with the painter, and rapt with the poet. Let me figure him, wandering out in a sweet evening, to inhale the balmy gales, and enjoy the growing luxuriance of the spring; himself the while in the blooming youth of life. He looks abroad on all Nature, and thro' Nature up to

Nature's God ; his soul, by swift delighting degrees, is wrapt above this sublunary sphere, until he can be silent no longer, and bursts out into the glorious enthusiasm of Thompson—

“ These, as they change, Almighty Father, these
Are but the varied God, the rolling year
Is full of thee : ”

and so on, in all the spirit and ardor of that charming hymn.

These are no ideal pleasures ; they are real delights ; and I ask what of the delights among the sons of men are superior, not to say, equal to them ? And they have this precious, vast addition, that conscious Virtue stamps them for her own ; and lays hold on them to bring herself into the presence of a witnessing, judging, and approving God.*

(44) TO MR. PETER HILL, BOOKSELLER,
EDINBURGH.

(CHAMBERS, 1852, in part, and completed in DOUGLAS' ED., 1877.)†

DUMFRIES, *Feb.* 1794.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am half angry with you that you are not at any pains to keep squares with our Library here. They complain much of your not attending properly to their orders ; and, but for the exertions of Mr. Lewars, a young man whom I once introduced to you, they had applied elsewhere. Apropos, the first volume of Dalrymple's Memoirs, Mr.

* “ They who have been told that Burns was ever a degraded being, who have permitted themselves to believe that his only consolations were those of ‘ the opiate guilt applies to grief, ’ will do well to pause over this noble letter and judge for themselves. The enemy under which he was destined to sink, had already beaten in the outworks of his constitution when these lines were penned.”—*Lockhart's “ Life of Burns.”*

† Mr. Douglas was enabled to complete this letter through the politeness of George Wilson, Esq., of Dalmarnock, possessor of the original MS.

Lewars had the ill-luck to get spoiled in his possession, which unless he can replace will bring him in for the whole book. It was published, I think, in separate volumes, so that, with a little industry, you may possibly be able to supply him. Mr. Wallace, the gentleman who will deliver this, can inform you of the edition, &c.

Now that business is over, how are you? and how do you weather this accursed time? God only knows what will be the consequence; but in the meantime, the country—at least our part of it—is still progressive to the devil. For my part, I “jouk and let the jaw flee o’er.” As my hopes in this world are but slender, I am turning rapidly devotee, in the prospect of sharing largely in the world to come.

How is old, sinful Smellie coming on with this world?—for as to the other, I suppose he has given that up. Is there any talk of his second volume? If you meet with my much valued old friend, Colonel Dunbar, of the Crochallan Fencibles, remember me most affectionately to him. Alas! not unfrequently, when my heart is in a wandering humor, I live past scenes over again: to my mind’s eye, you, Dunbar, Cleg-horn, Cunningham, &c., present their friendly phizes, and my bosom aches with tender recollections,—
Adieu,

ROBT. BURNS.

(⁹) TO MR. JAMES JOHNSON, MUSIC ENGRAVER, EDINBURGH.

(CROMEK, in part, and completed in DOUGLAS’ ED., 1877.)*

MY DEAR SIR,—I send you, by my friend Mr. Wallace, forty-one songs for your 5th Volume. Mr. Clarke has also a good many, if he have not, with

* From the original MS. in the British Museum.

his usual indolence, *cast them at the cocks*. I have still a good parcel amongst my hands in scraps and fragments ; so that I hope we will make shift with our last volume.

You should have heard from me long ago ; but over and above some vexatious share in the pecuniary losses of these accursed tunes, I have, all this winter, been plagued with low spirits and blue devils ; so that I have almost hung my harp upon the willow trees.

I have got an old Highland durk for which I have great veneration, as it once was the durk of Lord Balmerino. It fell into bad hands who stripped it of the silver mounting, as well as the knife and fork. I have some thoughts of sending it to your care to get mounted anew. Our friend Clarke owes me an account, somewhere about a pound, which would go a good way in paying the expense. I remember you once settled an account in this way before ; and as you still have money matters to settle with him, you might accommodate us both.—I do not, my dear Sir, wish you to do this ; and I beg you will not hint it to Mr. Clarke ; if we do it at all, I will break it to him myself. My best compliments to your worthy old father and your better half.—Yours

ROBT. BURNS.

DUMFRIES, [Feb.] 1794.

(³) TO MR. ALEXANDER FINDLATER,

SUPERVISOR OF EXCISE, DUMFRIES.

(CROMEK, 1808.)

DUMFRIES, [Feb.] 1794.

SIR,—Inclosed are the two schemes. I would not have troubled you with the Collector's one, but for suspicion lest it be not right. Mr. Erskine promised

me to make it right, if you will have the goodness to shew him how. As I have no copy of the scheme for myself, and the alterations being very considerable from what it was formerly, I hope that I shall have access to this scheme I send you, when I come to face up my new books. *So much for schemes.*—And that no scheme to betray a FRIEND, or mislead a STRANGER ; to seduce a YOUNG GIRL, or rob a HEN-ROOST ; to subvert LIBERTY, or bribe an EXCISEMAN ; to disturb the GENERAL ASSEMBLY, or annoy a GOS-SIPPING ; to overthrow the credit of ORTHODOXY, or the authority of OLD SONGS ; to oppose *your wishes*, or frustrate *my hopes*—MAY PROSPER, is the sincere wish and prayer of

ROBT. BURNS.

(¹³) TO ALEX. CUNNINGHAM, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

(CURRIE in part, completed, DOUGLAS, 1877.)*

DUMFRIES, 3d March 1794.

SINCE I wrote you the last lugubrious sheet, I have not had time to write you further. When I say that I had not time ; that, as usual, means that the three demons Indolence, Business, and Ennui, have so completely shared my hours among them as not to leave me a five minutes' fragment to take up a pen in.

Thank heaven, I feel my spirits buoying upwards with the renovating year. Now I shall in good earnest take up Thomson's songs. I daresay he thinks I have used him unkindly, and, I must own, with too much appearance of truth ; though, if offences come only from the heart, I assure him that I am innocent. Apropos, do you know the much admired old Highland air called "The Sutor's Dochter?" It

* From the original MS. in possession of James T. Gibson Craig, Esq., Edinburgh.

is a first-rate favorite of mine, and I have written what I reckon one of my best songs to it. I will send it you, set as I think it should be, and as it was sung with great applause in many fashionable groups by Major Robertson, of Lude, who was here with his corps. By the way, if you do not know him, let me beg of you, as you would relish a high acquisition to your social happiness, to get acquainted with him. He always, every time I had the very great pleasure of being in his company, reminded me of a forcible saying of Charlie Caldwell, a drunken carrier in Ayr :—Charles had a *cara sposa* after his own heart, who used to take caup about with him, till neither could see the other ; then those honest genii of old Scottish social life (“reaming swats” used to transport the tender pair beyond the bounds of sober joy, to the reign of rapture !)—the ardent lover would grapple the yielding fair to his bosom :—“Marget, ye’re a glory to God, and the delight o’ my soul !”

As I cannot in conscience tax you with the postage of a packet, I must keep this bizzare melange of an epistle until I find the chance of a private conveyance. Here follows the song I have mentioned :—

SONG.

Tune—“The Sutor’s Dochter.”

Wilt thou be my Dearie ?
When sorrow wrings thy gentle heart,
O wilt thou let me cheer thee, &c.

(Page 198, *supra*.)

There is one commission that I must trouble you with. I lately lost a valuable seal, a present from a departed friend, which vexes me much.* I have gotten one of your Highland pebbles which I fancy would make a very decent one, and I want to cut

* Probably the seal, already more than once referred to, having for device a heart transpierced by cross darts.

my armorial bearings on it ; will you be so obliging as enquire what will be the expense of such a business? I do not know that my name is matriculated, as the heralds call it, at all ; but I have invented one for myself, so, you know I will be chief of the name ; and, by courtesy of Scotland, will likewise be entitled to supporters. These however I do not intend having on my seal. I am a bit of a herald, and shall give you, *secundum artem*, my arms. On a field, azure, a holly-bush, seeded, proper, in base ; a shepherd's pipe and crook, saltier-wise, also proper, in chief. On a wreath of the colors, a woodlark perching on a sprig of bay-tree, proper, for crest. Two mottoes : round the top of the crest, "Wood-Notes Wild ;" at the bottom of the shield, in the usual place, "Better a wee bush than nae bield." By the shepherd's pipe and crook I do not mean the nonsense of painters in Arcadia, but a *Stock* and *Horn*, and a *Club*, such as you see at the head of Allan Ramsay, in Allan's quarto edition of the "Gentle Shepherd." By the bye, do you know Allan? He must be a man of very great genius—Why is he not more known?—Has he no patrons? or, do "Poverty's cold wind and crushing rain beat keen and heavy" on him? I once, and but once, got a glance of that noble edition of the noblest pastoral in the world ; and dear as it was, I mean dear as to my pocket, I would have bought it ; but was told it was printed and engraved for subscribers only. He is the only artist who has hit genuine pastoral costume. What, my dear Cunningham, is there in riches, that they narrow and encallous the heart so? I think that were I as rich as the sun, I would be as generous as day ; but as I have no reason to imagine my soul a nobler one than every other man's, I must conclude that wealth imparts a bird-lime quality to the possessor, at which the man in native poverty, would have revolted. What has led me to this, is the

idea of so much merit as Mr. Allan possesses, and such riches as a nabob, or government contractor possesses, and why do not they form a mutual league? Let Wealth shelter and cherish unprotected Merit, and the gratitude and celebrity of that merit will richly repay the outlay.

March 22.

In fact, I am writing you a journal, and not a letter. A bustle of business has laid my epistolary pen aside in silence, since I took it up last to you.

I have just received a letter from Thomson which has filled me with self-reproaches. I will directly, and in good earnest, set about his work. I am sorry I did not know him when I was in Edinburgh; but I will tell you a plot which I have been contriving: you and he shall, in the course of this summer, meet me Half-way; that is, at the "*Bield Inn*;"* and there we will pour out a Drink Offering before the Lord, and enter into a solemn League and Covenant, never to be broken nor forgotten.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward loon is he:
Wha first beside his chair shall fa'
He is the King amang us THREE.

ROBT. BURNS.

* Such a meeting as is here proposed never took place. The *Bield Inn* and the *Crook Inn* are each pretty closely situated on the highroad, exactly half-way between Edinburgh and Dumfries, near Tweedsmuir in Peebles-shire.



BURNS'S ARMS.

Burns, Robert

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1896 Burns, Robert.

P3 The complete works of
Robert Burns

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